

# Between Identity and Crisis

*Discourse surrounding peace operations and  
reactions to discourse challenges*

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# 1 Introduction

When Sweden decided to send troops to participate in the European Union (EU) military operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as well as to Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR), the decisions were approbated by unanimity in Parliament. Members of all political parties stressed the importance and valour of sending troops to stop conflicts and to protect civilians in Africa. The United Nations (UN) had officially mandated the EU to intervene, and the Members of Parliament (MPs) expressed how proud they were that competent Swedish soldiers would put their lives at risk in order to protect others. Sweden had a moral obligation to participate.

But some things went wrong. Five years after Operation Artemis in the DRC was completed, Swedish media uncovered the fact that Swedes had witnessed fellow soldiers engaging in torture. Furthermore, the Swedish Armed Forces had hushed the whole incident down. Operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA<sup>1</sup> was authorised in late 2007, deployed the following year and completed in March 2009. From its conception, the operation was criticised for taking sides in the conflict and for merely being an excuse for France to increase the legitimacy of its military presence in the country. In Sweden, voices were raised concerning the political delicacy of the situation. Sweden is a country that identifies itself as a peace-supporting, human rights-respecting and historically neutral country. How then, were these apparent challenges to the country's self-image handled by the Swedish media and decision-makers?

## 1.1 Aim

The aim of this paper is to increase the understanding of Swedish identity, norms and images in relation to peace operations, and in particular the recent EU missions in Africa. The paper will look at the source of Swedish identity and norms and consequent discourse surrounding participation in peace operations, what behaviour it dictates, and

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<sup>1</sup> République centrafricaine (RCA), French translation of the Central African Republic (CAR). In this paper the EU peace operation in Chad and the CAR will be known as EUFOR Tchad/RCA following its official French name.

how the media and decision-makers react when expectations are not met. An additional though secondary aim is to show how social constructivist theory can be employed in a pragmatic and novel way in order to achieve the former.

There has been surprisingly little public debate about Swedish participation in peace operations under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). According to Jan Joel Andersson, Swedish representatives in Brussels, Paris and London have more or less flaunted Swedish participation in Operation Artemis, while neither Government nor opposition have been interested in discussing it at home (Andersson 2005: 17). This is worrying for at least two reasons: firstly, if the Swedish population to a large extent is uninformed of why their country is sending troops to Africa, it may weaken the possibilities for popular control over Swedish foreign and security policy. Secondly, and as a consequence of the former, Swedish popular support for participating in peace operations might erode.

Though historically a strong contributor, engagement can be brittle. While a majority of the Swedish people still support their country's participation in peace operations, support has slowly and steadily declined during the last couple of decades (Swedish National Board of Psychological Defence 2010: 156). Scandals or traumatic shocks might further weaken support. One textbook example is the revelation of torture at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq in 2004 and its effects on the public opinion and support (Voeten & Brewer 2006: 819). Another might be the US engagement in Somalia in 1993, where scenes of American soldiers being dragged around in Mogadishu led to a quick pullback of troops.

However, despite the purported "body bag syndrome", the general public is actually willing to make sacrifices as long as they know why and that the cause is worthwhile (Dauber 2001). My hope is therefore that this paper might serve as valuable information concerning the knowledge, expectations and support of participation in peace operations. In turn, this may contribute to a public and committing debate about why and how a country like Sweden (or other countries for that matter) should participate towards peace and development in the world.

## **1.2 Research questions and scope**

This leads me to pose the following research questions:

1. *What is the dominant contemporary discourse surrounding Swedish participation in peace operations?*
2. *How do key actors react when that discourse is challenged?*

I have limited myself to look more closely at two cases: Swedish participation in Operation Artemis and in EUFOR Tchad/RCA. Both were completed under EU command and were located in Africa. One of the most important advances with regards to international peace operations during the last decade has been the development and exercise of EU capacities in crisis management. In less than a decade the EU has fielded over twenty missions and operations, from the Balkans through Africa to Indonesia. Several of these have been large military operations, of which most have been fielded on the African continent. Although these have had short mandates and short life-spans, the development is still remarkable.

Sweden has been an active participant in the ESDP operations. It has committed several hundred troops to Operation Artemis in the DRC and EUFOR Tchad/RCA, which I will look more closely at in this paper. “Europeanisation” (defined more closely in chapter 3) of Swedish foreign and security policy is arguably the most important single factor changing Swedish foreign policy identity today. However, as I will show in the third chapter, it is an identity that has been and continues to be shaped by military non-alignment and internationalism. All three traits help dictate the norms for what foreign and security policy options are permissible for Sweden to engage in. I will therefore answer my first research question by looking at the Government proposition, parliamentary debate and media coverage preceding the deployment of Swedish troops to the DRC as well as to Chad. My hypothesis is that the discourses expressed in both cases will be similar, and build on Swedish identity in relation to peace operations and Africa, which in turn is a product of Swedish culture and historical experience.

As mentioned earlier on, in both operations Swedish troops got involved in a situation that did not reflect those ideals expressed by the dominant discourse. Much has been written on the intentions and interests behind the development of the ESDP in general (inter alia, see Manners 2002; 2006a; 2006b; Diez 2005; Posen 2006). Controversy has also surrounded French engagement in strengthening EU military presence in Africa. This will only be considered to the extent that it clashes with Swedish aims on the ground. My focus will be on how controversy is handled by Swedish decision-makers and the media at home. When deeds and discourse do not match up, how is it covered in the media and how do decision-makers react? This will answer my second research question. My hypothesis is that Swedish decision-makers as well as the media and Armed Forces reacted in accordance with the social psychological theory of cognitive dissonance. This theory states that in cases of cognitive dissonance (i.e. expectations about the world and facts do not match up), actors will work to minimise that dissonance (i.e. convergence by altering expectations or perception of facts). Consequently, key actors involved will try to find ways to lessen the negative impact of the controversy, or dismiss the controversies altogether.

### ***1.3 Structure of the paper***

In chapter 2, the theoretical framework for my argument will be presented. Key concepts and causal mechanisms will be defined, and methodology will be considered. In chapter 3, I will examine the discourse surrounding Swedish foreign policy in general, its relationship with Africa, and the participation in Operation Artemis and EUFOR Tchad/RCA in particular. Chapter 4 will look at how criticism and controversies preceding and following Operation Artemis and EUFOR Tchad/RCA were framed and handled by Swedish media and decision-makers. In chapter 5, I will discuss how the reaction and framing of controversy by key actors can be seen in light of the theoretical framework and central hypotheses. I will also consider whether other possible explanatory models are able to explain the empirical findings. Finally, in chapter 6 some concluding remarks and suggestions for future study will be made.

## **2 Theoretical framework**

For empirical findings to give meaning beyond their immediate context, they need to be embedded in a theoretical framework. The aim of this chapter is to outline such a framework. Firstly, I will look at the main theoretical approaches to the study of International Relations (IR)<sup>2</sup>, settling down on social constructivism as my choice for this paper. Secondly, the role of norms and identity in shaping actors' view of and actions in international politics will be considered. Thirdly, I will borrow from the social psychological theory of cognitive dissonance to shed light on the reaction of actors to situations in which empirical findings are revealed to diverge from the norms that their identity prescribes. Finally, some methodological considerations will be made.

### ***2.1 From Rationalism to Social Constructivism***

The study of IR has for a long time been dominated by the rationalist approaches of realism and liberalism, more recently in their reformed versions of neo-realism and neo-liberalism. Both approaches are rationalist in that they make some common assumptions about how human behaviour can be explained. Following the macro-economic model of rational behaviour, rationalist theory assumes that actors seek to maximise their utility or interests (see Fearon & Wendt 2002).

Within realism and liberalism, interests are in turn assumed to be power, security and welfare. According to one of the founders of the neo-realist approach, Kenneth Waltz, international behaviour can be explained by looking at the structure of the international system: it is anarchic, meaning that there is no higher authority than the states (Waltz 1979). Whereas neo-liberalists such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye share a lot of the same assumptions as neo-realists do, they also put more faith in the possibility of institutions and organisations to mitigate the cooperation problems between states (Jervis 1999). However, inside both broad approaches there is much

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<sup>2</sup> International Relations, meaning the study of the relationship between states, will here be written with capitalisation and abbreviated to IR. The actual relationship between states, international relations, will be written with miniscules.



variation. Academics disagree among each other on what theories most adequately explain behaviour and phenomena, such as the end of the Cold War, the European integration process and diverging practice among similar states. Some have tried to apply well-used theories from the rationalist toolbox to explain these anomalies, whereas others have sought a different approach altogether.

Since Alexander Wendt's article "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics" (1992), social constructivist research has grown enormously. Like its rationalist counterparts, social constructivism today is a broad school with many different communities. However, a minimum common denominator of ontological assumptions unifies them: firstly, human interaction is mainly shaped socially through inter-subjective beliefs, rather than by material factors alone. Secondly, these shared beliefs shape the identities and interests of purposive actors (Adler 2002: 100-101; Checkel 1998: 325-326; Finnemore & Sikkink 2001: 392-393). However, unlike rationalist theories such as neo-realism and neo-liberalism, social constructivism does not in itself give any specific claims or predictions on how specific agents (such as the US, China or Sweden) should work (Fearon & Wendt 2002: 56). What it does offer though is a framework with a set of tools for better understanding social processes. And then more information can be fed into the model in order to understand more specific situations or patterns in international relations, including theories around the role of norms and identity in shaping perceptions and behaviour. As this is the focus of my paper, I will therefore adopt a social constructivist framework.

## ***2.2 Identity, norms and expectations***

Norms were for a long period overlooked in IR. Or rather, norms were actively dismissed as not having any causal power (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998; Klotz 1999: 13). According to realists, states do not follow norms unless these coincide with their national interests. Thus, it would be wrong to believe that it is the norms and not the interests that dictated the state's behaviour. Social constructivists have challenged this

conclusion, stating that norms actually do influence the way states act. However, there has been less agreement among social constructivists on *how* norms influence actors.

In reviewing three seminal constructivist works in his 1998 article “The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory”, Checkel pointed out some key questions for further research (1998). One was the fact that international norms tend to have different impact on different countries, but that the mechanism through which this happens is not clearly explained. Norms have been conceptualised as “shared collective expectations” (Björkdahl 2002: 40) or “shared (thus social) understandings of standard of behavior” (Klotz 1999: 14). However, this is not sufficient, as it does not specify *who* should share it. Developing the definition thus, Finnemore & Sikkink conceptualise norms as “a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity” (1998: 891). Put in other words, identity prescribes certain standards of appropriate behaviour, also known as norms. However, even “identity” can be defined as a set of norms. We can therefore differentiate between “constitutive norms” which define identity, and “regulative norms” which prescribe behaviour as a consequence of a given identity (Jepperson, Wendt & Katzenstein 1996: 54).

Where do those norms that constitute identity come from then? Some scholars, like Wendt, put primary importance on the international system in shaping identities. Others, such as the contributors to Katzenstein’s volume *The Culture of National Security* (1996), believe that identity is mainly a domestic attribute, stemming from national ideologies and characteristics, which shapes states’ perceptions of interests and thereby also policy (Finnemore & Sikkink 2001: 399). As I will try to show later on, in the case of Sweden, social democracy has been greatly formative of the country’s national identity. But those underlying factors that shape identity are also subject to change and evolution. Furthermore, it is not possible to rely solely on domestic attributes in establishing a country’s identity. As will be detailed later on, Sweden defined itself in opposition to “Europe” and the characteristics associated to the continent. Similarly Neumann has written on how Europe has needed “the East” in order to identify itself (1998). The international context, in turn, is also subject to

change and evolution, which influence a country's identity. As a consequence, I will pay attention to both domestic and international factors in outlining Swedish identity.

Although norms and identity are collectively held, their effects can be seen on the level of the individual decision-maker, soldier, diplomat or other person formulating or implementing the state's policy. This happens through what March and Olsen have called "the logic of appropriateness". Accordingly, "[t]o act appropriately is to proceed according to the institutionalized practices of a collectivity, based on mutual, and often tacit, understandings of what is true, reasonable, natural, right, and good" (March & Olsen 2004: 4). Then, given a specific situation, the individual (such as a soldier) with a given identity (such as Swedish) should choose to act in a particular way. Others will also expect that individual to act according to what is appropriate for him or her to do. This is one of the functions of the logic of appropriateness. It makes it possible for individuals to reduce ambiguity and create common understanding of actions and situations. It also makes it easier for the individual to choose how to act, as norms are internalised, rather than making complex calculations of utility.

However, the logic of appropriateness or normative behaviour does not rule out completely that people may act according to expected utility, as March & Olsen call "the logic of consequence". The two can possibly be reconciled: people choose actions according to their expected utility, but within the constrained set of what is appropriate. It follows that individuals have a certain room of manoeuvre that is essentially permissible, but that problems will arise if borders of appropriateness are crossed.

### ***2.3 When narrative and reality do not match***

Sometimes, the actions of soldiers participating in peace operations abroad do not match their expected behaviour. One example is the revelation of mistreatment in the Iraqi prison of Abu Ghraib. Another is the ill-fated German bombing in Kunduz, Afghanistan, 4 September 2009, which resulted in many civilian casualties and led to great political repercussions at home (Spiegel 2 April 2010). The controversies these created show the salience of norms in relation to military interventions abroad.

At the same time, countries like Sweden spend large sums of money on aid every year, some of which ends up being spent on less than benevolent activities. According to Paul Collier, about 40 per cent of Africa's military expenditures are covered by development aid (Collier 2007: 103). On a similar note the Swedish journalist Bengt Nilsson has claimed that Swedish aid money has been used to finance conflicts in Africa (Nilsson 2008). Despite this and many other cases of aid abuse, the Swedish public is consistently positive towards spending its tax money on development projects. On the other hand, the public seems particularly sensitive towards controversy relating to peace operations, perhaps because of their special nature. Scandals, deaths of civilians or soldiers may therefore lead to the whole policy being questioned, and consequently, much effort may be needed in order to minimise the negative impact on discourse and self-image.

### **2.3.1 Contemporary peace operations and liberal democracies**

Since their inception after the Second World War, peace operations have developed from small peacekeeping missions into large multi-dimensional endeavours. Some have even taken de facto control over entire countries, such as in Timor-Leste and Kosovo. Not only the peace operations have changed, so have the conflict situations in which they are sent to as well. During the Cold War, peacekeepers were mandated and mobilised to keep two formerly belligerent parties apart, on the basis of a peace agreement and mutual consent. Now, soldiers are being sent into situations where there is no peace to keep, there is no clear picture of who is fighting who, consent is a fluid concept, and civilians have increasingly become targets rather than collaterals of conflict. Counter-insurgency and state-building, which are inherently political, have become commonplace. In such situations, a robust mandate might be needed, that allows troops to use physical force in situations other than self-defence<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2008, the United Nations published its principles and guidelines for peacekeeping operations as the so-called "Capstone Doctrine". The stated aim of the document was to capture the experience of six decades of peacekeeping (United Nations 2008). The document considers

Peace operations are a blunt tool. Furthermore, it is an extremely obtrusive form of international action. Whereas humanitarian aid and development projects also affect the lives of people residing in conflict area, their level of interference is generally much lower. Peace operations bring troops into the direct line of conflict. They often run counter to the traditional doctrine of sovereignty and non-intervention. Despite all this, the field of peace operations has been kept largely under-theorised until quite recently. Some academics have concentrated on the conditions for when intervention should take place, such as humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect (see Walzer 1977; Evans & Sahnoun 2002). Others have concentrated on the interests driving peace operations, such as sustaining a particular world order and spreading Western norms and economic system (see Paris 2002; Pugh 2004; Bellamy & Williams 2005).

However, whereas the above-stated academics concentrate mostly on the role and motives of international decision-makers in Washington D.C., London, Paris and the UN Headquarters in New York, Michael Ignatieff has written on the public perception of peace operations. According to him, although modern media coverage of atrocities abroad have made the public and decision-makers in Western liberal democracies cry out for action, their conscience does not match up with their willingness to take the sacrifices that come with military intervention (Ignatieff 1998; Ignatieff 2000). The common idea seems to be that Western publics are risk-averse and do not wish to see their own sons and daughters being killed in order to protect people in distant regions of the world. Public support for peace operations is fragile.

The “body bag syndrome” might be a self-fulfilling prophecy rather than an iron law. As Holsti writes, surveys during the Kosovo war showed that Americans were not overwhelmingly against using ground forces, and by consequence, suffering casualties (Holsti 2001: 37). The public’s tolerance to casualties seems to be related to its perception of how worthwhile the war is. Negative news from the front, such as casualties, information about torture, bribes or political involvement in the local feuds,

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inter alia concepts as robustness of mandate, consent, neutrality and impartiality. For commentary on the Capstone Doctrine, see de Coning et al. 2008

may lead to a deterioration of morale at home. This holds in particular if the public is uninformed about why their country is engaged in battles.

There are many stakeholders in Sweden who have a particular interest in avoiding public outcry over unpopular interventions. Firstly, Swedish participation in peace operations is authorised by civilian politicians who are up for re-election every four years. Whereas successful operations may give them recognition for their international responsibility and solidarity, negative news may lead to an erosion of support. Secondly, the Armed Forces may also have an interest in avoiding negative publicity about their activities abroad, for fear of getting reduced support or budget. Thirdly, in a EU-context, Swedish civil servants have been able to capitalise on the fact that Sweden has been an active supporter of the ESDP, which in turn brings both recognition and increased influence. (Andersson 2005: 17). And fourthly, both decision-makers and the larger public are interested in a positive image of Sweden as a supporter of peace and development in the world, not least for their own self-satisfaction. In other words, there are strong interests in preserving the positive image of Swedish participation in peace operations and Swedish soldiers. Yet sometimes, ideals and actions do not match.

### **2.3.2 Cognitive dissonance and Reconciling Expectations and Reality**

IR has traditionally been an area of study that has welcomed insights from diverse sciences such as political science, economics, law and philosophy. Social constructivism has enlarged the toolbox, borrowing from inter alia social psychology. Here, I will look more closely at the theory of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is a situation in which a person holds two competing ideas in his or her head at the same time, e.g. a certain belief of what Swedes do and certain knowledge of what Swedes actually are doing. According to Leon Festinger, who originally introduced the theory, it hypothesises the following:

1. The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance.
2. When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance (Festinger 1957: 3).

One of the situations in which cognitive dissonance may occur according to Festinger is in the case of inconsistency with cultural mores. As an example of the latter, Elliot Aronson suggests that “[i]f a college professor loses his patience with one of his students and shouts at him angrily, his knowledge of what he is doing is dissonant with his idea about what is the proper, acceptable behavior of a professor toward his students in our culture. In some other cultures this might be appropriate behavior and, therefore, would not arouse dissonance” (Aronson 1969: 6). The theory, as I will show below, can also be used in order to cast new light on reactions to decisions that violate Swedish foreign policy identity.

The theory of cognitive dissonance has been employed in IR before. Robert Jervis borrowed it in his exploration of perceptions and misperceptions in international politics where he looked at how decision-makers alter their values or beliefs in order to reassure themselves that they did the best decision they could post facto. This is done in order to support their self-image, but has the effect of making less rational decisions in the future (Jervis 1976: 382-406).

Jervis uses cognitive dissonance theory to explain path-dependency and sub-optimal decision-making. My employment of the same theory will be done in a somewhat different way. The goal of decision-makers is still to preserve a self-image. However, instead of only looking at individual decision-makers and their personal self-image, I will be looking at how a collective of decision-makers work, consciously or subconsciously, to preserve a discourse based on their collective identity in the face of facts that threaten that discourse and in turn identity. Furthermore, whereas Jervis

looked at post facto explanations of sub-optimal decisions and actions in terms of utility, I will look at post facto explanation of decisions and actions that violate norms.

While several scholars from at least Machiavelli and onwards have argued against norms outside of the domestic sphere, it is difficult to deny that globalisation, with increased travelling and the development of instant media coverage, has expanded the boundaries of conscience, as authors such as Ignatieff have argued (1998; 2000). As people see atrocities being committed in real-time from their homes, they have come to demand interventions, and decision-makers have followed. What happens when the norms of a people are revealed to be violated through their country's foreign policy? Following the theory of cognitive dissonance, I hypothesise that

1. The violation of the norm will be externalised ("it was not the Swedes, but the others who did it" or "it was only one or a few persons/rogue elements"), or
2. The violation of the norm will be, either intentionally or unintentionally, dismissed ("it has not happened" or "we would not do such a thing").

Obviously, the viability of either strategy depends on the magnitude of the violation. If the violation is too great, it cannot be externalised or covered up, and may therefore spark a larger policy change or change in identity. So far Sweden has never experienced a fundamental challenge to its self-image as a moral power in international relations, such as the US did in Vietnam. However, even smaller violations need to be managed in order to avoid an accumulation of facts that might threaten a country's identity.

## ***2.4 Methodological considerations***

Let me make some methodological considerations before proceeding. The first issue that I will address is how I will be able to reach an answer to the initial research questions. This includes the use of methods such as process-tracing and discourse analysis in order to collect and analyse data. Secondly, since I will base my answer on limited empirical material, I will consider how I can make sure that my answers hold



correct even if I were to consider all existing potential data. In other words, will my findings allow me to say something beyond the empirical material considered?

My theoretical framework essentially considers the paper's ontological foundation; whether or not the world and phenomena are objectively and physically given, or inter-subjective; whether or not people choose actions based on norms or calculated consequences. The following methodological considerations consider the paper's epistemological foundation; how can we assure that what we know is correct? Here the purportedly great divide is between positivists and post-positivists of different theoretical schools of IR, with constructivists straddling between them. I will not go into detail in explaining the difference between the two positions, which can be read in greater detail elsewhere (e.g. Wight 2002). Steve Smith defines positivism as "a methodological view that combines naturalism [...] and a belief in regularities" (1996: 17). In turn "naturalism" is the view that the methodology of the natural sciences can be used in social sciences, as the physical and social worlds are either fundamentally the same or at least enough so (ibid.: 16). Post-positivists reject this, believing that the methodology of natural sciences cannot uncover any regularities in the social sciences, and that such objective regularities might actually not exist at all.

Like many other social constructivists, I place myself somewhere between the two. I believe in regularities and that phenomena can be explained by using theories of social behaviour that have been inductively arrived at. However, I also believe that the social world cannot be reduced to the physical, that data need not be objectively given and that specific techniques can be used to uncover that data. I will therefore explain how I intend to gather data in order to answer my research questions.

#### **2.4.1 Discourse analysis**

How do we know a norm when we see one? Norms can be identified using discourse analysis. Neumann defines a discourse as "a system for bringing forth a set of statements and praxis which, by embedding itself in institutions and appearing as more or less normal, is constitutive of reality for its bearers and has a certain degree of

regularity in a set of social relations” (Neumann 2001: 18). Discourse analysis thus is a method of inquiry that aims to show “which values and elements of identity are basic to a society’s self-perception and which values and elements of identity are significant in a given context” (Boekle et al. 2001: 8). In other words, finding frameworks of meaning and the limits of possible policy options, i.e. norms (Rieker 2006: 18).

According to Neumann, a certain degree of cultural competence is needed in order to do a successful discourse analysis (Neumann 2001: 50-55). You need to know the context such as institutions in which discourses are embedded. The outlining of Swedish national and foreign policy identity in the following chapter will serve to give some basic although not exhaustive cultural competence. He then suggests the first three steps in order to do a discourse analysis: choosing and limiting the discourse, identifying the representations present in the discourse, and then discriminating between layers of the discourse depending on their degree of permanence (ibid.: 55-70). The process then continues by looking at what conditions call forth a particular discourse, and which institutions (patterns of behaviour) are triggered by the discourse.

As for the first step, the discourse has been limited to recent Swedish participation in peace operations. I have chosen to look at participation in peace operations in general as well as in two EU-led missions in Africa in particular. With regards to the second step, the next chapter will show how three defining norms can be found in Swedish foreign policy discourse: internationalism, military non-alignment and europeanisation. These will be defined later on.

Finally, the third step in doing a discourse analysis is identifying the different layers of the discourse. In this study I will divide it in three: the deep, the intermediate and the superficial. In other words, the deep-rooted identity, the framing of the larger issue or area at hand, and the handling of the immediate case or context. The deeper the discourse sticks, the harder it is to change. The first level equates Swedish identity. The second level of the discourse is Swedish peace operations in general, and in this case, Swedish relationship with Africa. The third is the discourse surrounding the particular

peace operations I will look at, both peace operations in Africa, implemented in the same decade and under a EU flag.

The last level is dependent on the second, as the second level is dependent on the first. Conversely, the same degree of dependency does not run in the opposite direction. Sweden will still be able to uphold an internationalist identity despite not participating in a particular peace operation in Africa. However, if discourses at the third level are challenged systematically, it might result in a change at deeper level, though this takes a considerable amount of time.

Following this, the next step in performing a discourse analysis is determining what conditions call forth a particular discourse, and which institutions (patterns of behaviour) are triggered by the discourse. Put shortly, when Sweden decides to intervene militarily in another country, it is usually preceded by some triggering situation or event in the host country, thereafter an international response such as a UN Security Council resolution mandating a peace operation. This leads to a formal chain of events which in turn is initiated by the Swedish Government. As with all Swedish participation in robust peace operations abroad, the contributions have been presented to Parliament as a Government proposition, which thereafter has been deliberated in committee and in plenary before being passed. In this deliberative process, possible Swedish participation has to be framed both in terms of legality and moral aspects, and thereafter a formal decision can be made to participate or not. These are the material conditions that call forth and are triggered by the discourse.

Academics differ in the way they employ discourse analysis. In this paper I will use a soft version, to differentiate from those that purport that inter-subjective meaning does not exist outside of language (see Rieker 2006: 18-20). On the contrary, I consider inter-subjective meaning to manifest itself through various forms of language, meaning speech and text as well as potentially action.

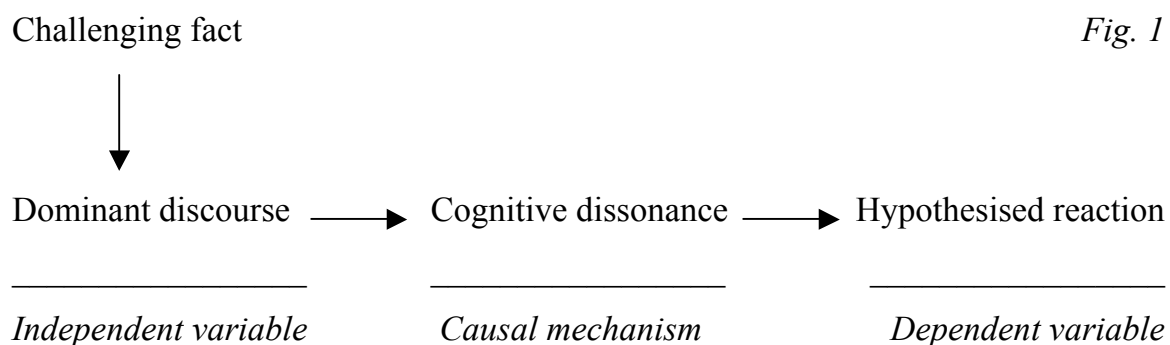
Finally, there will always be some people who disagree greatly with the majority in their opinion and view of a particular issue. The dominant discourse however is by far the most common. There is also a strong element of power in the discourse, as

Foucault has argued, as it not only defines the boundaries of what can be done, but also what can be said (Risse 2003: 16-17). Although the effect of the discourse is similar to the norm it carries, the discourse can be said to go further. Rather than only saying what “is right”, it also says what “is”.

## 2.4.2 Process-tracing

My second research question asks how key actors react to an obvious challenge against the dominant discourse. In order to answer this question, a coherent narrative is needed. Process-tracing provides a framework for developing such a narrative. The goal of the method is to identify the intervening causal process, including the causal chain and causal mechanism, between one or several independent variables and the value of the dependent variable (George & Bennett 2005: 206). According to Peter Hall, “process-tracing is a methodology well-suited to testing theories in a world marked by multiple interaction effects, where it is difficult to explain outcomes in terms of two or three independent variables –precisely the world that more and more social scientists believe we confront” (Hall 2000: 18).

According to my hypothesised answer to my second research questions, i.e. that following the theory of cognitive dissonance, certain reaction can be expected on the side of key actors. Schematically put, it would look like this:



In other words, the value of the independent variable (discourse challenged by fact) causes a certain value on the dependent variable (reaction) through the mechanism

(theory; cognitive dissonance). Specifying the mechanism lifts the causal explanation from only being a statement of correlation, to being what Elster calls a true causal explanation (1989: 4). In the case where the value on the dependent variable turns out to be as expected, this will strengthen my theoretical claim. In the opposite case, where the dependent variable shows a different value, a new theory will have to be considered.

Many more post-positivistly inclined constructivists would probably disagree with this method. However Alexander Wendt has written that “[t]he core of [descriptions of causal mechanisms] is “process-tracing,” which in social science ultimately requires case studies and historical scholarship” (1999: 82). He further argues that “the real lesson of realism in the realm of causal explanation is to encourage a pragmatic approach, with the methodological criterion being whatever helps us understand how the world works” (ibid.: 82-83). Scientific realism here is not to be confused with the theoretical approach to IR often labelled as “realism”. In short, scientific realists (in contrast to empiricists) “hold that the characteristic product of successful scientific research is knowledge of largely theory-independent phenomena and that such knowledge is possible (indeed actual) even in those cases in which the relevant phenomena are not, in any non-question-begging sense, observable” (Boyd 2002). As cognitive dissonance is by definition unobservable, this pragmatic view is also suitable for answering my research question.

### **2.4.3 Sources of data**

I will rely on several different sources of data in order to answer my research questions. To answer my first question, I will use official documents from the Government and Parliament and long-term policy plans. These will, together with the more immediate debates preceding decision of participation in peace operations, help me assert which discourse dominates Swedish participation in peace operations. For my second research question, news articles, press releases, blogs and other sources of statements made by key actors will be more important.

Newspaper articles will be collected from the online databases Presstext and Retriever/Mediearkivet. The advantage of using these databases is that they include both online and print paper articles from all the largest and most important Swedish daily newspapers, as well as other periodicals and the Swedish radio news online archive. Additionally, Internet searches will be done for the online news sources, which include all of the major Swedish newspapers, radio and television. All have extensive online editions covering the news in real-time.

In some cases, minutes from more sensitive though relevant debates will be withheld from the public. However, I consider the problem as not being so critical as to make the study impossible. Decision-makers are still embedded in the discourse they express publicly even when they make decision behind closed doors. It is a testimony to the relevance of norms that politicians have to align their decisions to the dominant discourse.

While several sources of information will be used, the difference between these should be kept in mind. Official documents are usually the result of a longer deliberative and bureaucratic process than news articles are, blogs are at the opposite side of the same spectrum. The more bureaucratic a text is, the less overtly it may appeal to emotions. Discourses can still be elicited, even though it might be more challenging, and official documents arguably need to seek broader legitimacy by appealing to the dominant discourse than do individual blogs. Parliamentary debates are particularly informing. The various parties' disagreements or, possibly, consensus, show how cohesive the dominant discourse is and how much support it enjoys.

As for media sources, articles based upon information from news service providers such as Reuters, AFP or Swedish *Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå* (TT) tend to be more descriptive, devoid of a thicker narrative. Articles written as op-eds, blogs or by correspondents or stringers are more anecdotal. As most of the news articles are written based on news service providers' information rather than by correspondents, probably due to the high cost and difficulty in sending journalists to conflict zones in Africa, the general news picture is mostly descriptive; in other words, they tell us what the Swedes

have done and sometimes why, but not how well they did it or their more fundamental motivations for being there.

The objectivity of the news source also needs to be kept in mind. The military can be assumed to be less inclined to criticise Swedish peace operations abroad than is the media. The media is often said to be responsible for questioning and researching decisions and actions made by politicians and the military, but journalists and editors also carry political bias. Furthermore, truth is seldom unambiguous. Objective or not, all these sources together support, produce and reproduce the discourse surrounding the operations in question.

The majority of the sources used in this paper have been translated into English from Swedish, and all translations have been done by myself. The aim has been to make them as accurately worded as possible in order not to change the tone or nuance of the text. Therefore, some quotes will sound rather “Swenglish”.

#### **2.4.4 Case Studies, Reliability and Validity**

As the earlier discussion probably has made clear, this paper relies on the case study method. The choice is conscious because of the advantages that the case study method offers compared to statistical studies. According to George and Bennett, case studies are particularly suitable for building theories and hypotheses, examining causal mechanisms and addressing causal complexity (2005: 19-22). On the other hand, case studies often suffer from selection bias and a weak ability to weigh the causal strength of variables (ibid.: 25-35). This influences the reliability and validity of the study. However, the method is chosen because it better fits the nature and aim of this study: to build a novel theoretical framework in order to shed light on a phenomenon that is largely under-researched. It follows that any findings will have limited potential for inference to the larger population of cases.

With regards to reliability, my choice of sources will be comprehensive because of the limited number of cases. Thereby I will avoid the situation that an academic with the same research design but other sources would find completely diverging results. As

for internal validity, George and Bennett state that case studies make it possible for the researcher to develop more detailed concepts (2005: 19). They term this conceptual validity, but it also entails higher internal validity. In my case, I will be looking at norms, reflected and operationalised through discourses. Although there are methods of discovering such discourses, as shown earlier, discourses obviously suffer from the fact that they cannot be seen or sensed in any other way physically. It is therefore a great advantage to be able to study discourses in greater detail, as case studies allow.

As for external validity, other challenges arise. Again, my choice of cases is small. Both cases were chosen, not randomly, but rather because they were specific instances of discursive challenge. In other words, they were picked because of the expected value on the dependent variable. Furthermore, both operations that will be studied are similar in many respects: based in Africa, led by the EU, with a UN Security Council mandate and implemented during a relatively short period of time. They are therefore not representative of peace operations in general, with the consequence that the results found cannot be assumed to hold for all other possible cases as well. On the other hand, they differ in that they confront different traits of Swedish identity: one challenging the notion of Sweden as internationalist and a promoter of human rights, the other challenging the Swedish self-image of a fundamentally impartial and non-colonial peacekeeper. Narrowing down the difference to that and a few other factors will make it easier for me to test the viability of my theory and, in case only one and not the other case conform to my hypothesis, intervening variables can be identified. In such a case the study will be similar to what John Stuart Mills called the “Method of Difference” (1843; see Ragin 1987: 36-42).

Ultimately, a balance has to be found between high internal versus high external validity; fine-grained concepts and thick case descriptions, or broad-brushed generalisations that are testable for all cases. This study will be tilted towards the former as it aims to be explorative and theory-building.



### 3 Discourses

As stated in the previous chapter, discourse analysis can be done by choosing and limiting the discourse, identifying the representations present, and then discriminating between layers of the discourse depending on their degree of permanence. This is what I will do in this chapter. Firstly, I will look at Swedish identity as expressed through its foreign policy, in other words, its foreign policy identity. Following that, the discourses surrounding peace operations in general and surrounding Swedish relationship with Africa in particular will be investigated. Finally, I will look at how discourses are evoked in the cases of Operation Artemis and EUFOR Tchad/RCA.

#### 3.1 *Swedish Foreign Policy Identity*

National identity is a broad concept that can be further specified according to the set of issues that one is looking at. Consequently I will in this case address the foreign policy-specific identity, which in Sweden's case can be defined by military non-alignment and internationalism, and increasingly, europeanisation. These traits have emerged, developed and shaped policy over a long period of time. The Swedish foreign policy identity in turn is contingent on the country's more general national identity. During at least half a century, probably the most defining trait of Swedish identity has been that of social democracy and related ideas of *folkhem*<sup>4</sup>, equality and progress. Trägårdh has suggested the notion of "statist individualism" to describe the Swedish system; the idea that through state the individual can be liberated from the control of traditional institutions such as the family, churches and charities (Trägårdh 2002: 141-142). Europe came to represent the contrast to the modern Swedish society. However, Swedish national identity, and consequently, its foreign policy identity, is not static. During the last ten-fifteen years, it has gone through some remarkable changes. Nonetheless, the main defining traits of Swedish foreign policy identity are still present.

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<sup>4</sup> *Folkhem*, "the people's home", is a concept with roots in Swedish social democratic ideology. According to Trägårdh, it forms part of the narrative of Swedes as intrinsically democratic and freedom-loving (Trägårdh 2002: 131, 140).

### **3.1.1 Military non-alignment**

”Neutrality” has probably been the most important buzzword of Swedish foreign policy during the last two hundred years. Sweden has during this period stayed military non-aligned with the aim of possible neutrality in case of war in its neighbourhood. After loosing Finland to Russia in 1809 and a brief participation in the Napoleonic wars Sweden has gone unscathed. The doctrine of neutrality in war was elaborated in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and although applied with somewhat ambiguity at times, it helped Sweden stay outside two world wars (Rieker 2006: 64-66). As relationships between the former victors of the Second World War grew colder, Sweden held on to its military non-alignment.

The Swedish social welfare model was by many seen as a bridge between communism and capitalism. Indeed, Sweden also tried to act as a bridge between the East and the West, though with much difficulty. It was impossible to dismiss the fact that Sweden traditionally and culturally belonged to the Western sphere, and Swedish military planning was skewed towards planning against a possible invasion from the East. Much energy was therefore spent in order to convince parties to the Cold War, and in particular the Soviet Union, of Swedish commitment to neutrality (Bjereld et al. 2008; Agius 2006: 104-107).

Another key concept in the Swedish Cold War military non-alignment policy was Nordic balance. Early attempts at forming a Nordic defence alliance comprising of Denmark, Norway and Finland floundered. In 1948, the Soviet Union requested Finland to sign a treaty of mutual assistance, which the Finns agreed to with the aim to reconcile their wish for non-alignment and their need to avoid arousing any suspicion in Moscow. In 1949, Denmark and Norway signed the North Atlantic Treaty and thereby became NATO members. Sweden was therefore squeezed between the East and the West. Although some domestic parties demanded that Sweden would take a side in the Cold War (and join the West, according to most critics), the country eventually decided to stay non-aligned and build a strong defence of its own. In order to avoid increased pressure from either the East or the West, Sweden sought a Nordic balance: it lobbied

for constraining NATO-presence in Denmark and Norway so that the Soviet Union would not upscale its engagement in Finland (Bjereld et al. 2008: 111-115).

After the end of the Cold War and joining the EU, the Swedish policy of military non-alignment has been challenged. This will be detailed below. However, it is important to underline that Swedish non-alignment never meant isolationism or even a categorical dismissal of military participation internationally. Sweden has during the Cold War participated in several peacekeeping missions under UN auspices. The second UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, who largely invented UN peacekeeping as a novel way to engage in conflicts, was himself a Swedish national. Since 1956, around 100,000 Swedes have participated in peace operations, in sixty different countries (Swedish Armed Forces 2007). The participation in international peacekeeping operations was not seen as violating Swedish military non-alignment –peacekeeping is by definition supposed to be impartial, based on the consent of combating parties and backed by a UN resolution. Furthermore, Bjereld et al. have argued that Swedish engagement in conflict mediation and resolution made it possible to counter claims that Sweden was acting selfishly in sticking to its military non-alignment instead of taking a side in the fight against oppression (i.e. the Soviet Union). It gave Swedish non-alignment a veneer of morality (Bjereld et al. 2008: 38-40, 258-259).

### **3.1.2 Internationalism**

Participation in peacekeeping operations is only part of a broad policy of internationalism pursued by Sweden after the end of the Second World War. Whereas during the 1950s the foreign policy crux was the threat of nuclear weapons and disarmament, it was also the period of decolonisation. The result was a great increase in the number of UN member states, from 51 in 1945 to 159 in 1985. Sweden became a vocal supporter of both the UN and decolonisation.

The UN established its first aid programme in 1948, and in 1950 Sweden started donating annual sums to the UN Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance. In 1954 Sweden got its first minister for aid and throughout the 1950s and 1960s, a

Swedish development aid bureaucracy was established and grew. The Government bill prop. 1962/100 showed the full political recognition of the Swedish development aid. It established the size target of one per cent of gross national income and general directions for the aid which came to shape it in years to come. Furthermore, it articulated an ideological underpinning for the aid policy, stating that solidarity and humanitarianism were fully adequate motives for pursuing an aid policy (Bjereld et al. 2008: 205-215).

Swedish internationalism made it able to give more legitimacy to Sweden's doctrine of non-alignment (ibid.: 215). However, Christine Agius writes that it was inspired by genuine solidarity based on social democratic ideals (Agius 2006: 6), and there was probably honest political belief in that it was in the interest of Sweden as a small country (as well as the third world) to constrain the US and the Soviet Union (Bjereld et al. 2008: 243). Therefore, Sweden sided with the third world against the West in numerous votes in the UN (ibid.: 256). The most vocal representative of the independent Swedish foreign policy was Olof Palme, Social Democrat Prime Minister during the 1970s and early 1980s. His uncensored criticism of the US bombing in Vietnam during Christmas 1972 led to the US withdrawing its ambassador to Stockholm and freezing diplomatic ties. Swedish-American relationships did not thaw until over a year later (ibid.: 233-236).

In addition to Vietnam, Sweden showed particular interest in parts of Africa. Some of the liberation movements in the southern African region, which fought white minority rule, received funding from Sweden. This engagement along with a broad third world support continued throughout the Cold War, as is illustrated by the fact that Sweden still voted with developing countries as often as with the West in the UN during the periods of 1982-1983 and 1987-1988 (Sjöstedt 2002). However, the end of the Cold War spelled a new international context for Sweden. While Swedish identity still continued to shape policy, the contents of that identity and thereby also policy was somewhat changed.

### 3.1.3 Europeanisation

Military non-alignment and internationalism are still important defining traits of Swedish foreign policy identity. However, in the last decade or so, this identity has been both expanded and reformed by Swedish accession to the EU. As mentioned above, traditionally “Europe” (that is, continental Europe) has been pictured as representing the conceptual opposite to Sweden, in particular in social-democratic eyes. Europe was defined in terms of the “four Ks”: conservatism, capitalism, Catholicism and colonialism (all spelt with a K in Swedish) (Trägårdh 2002: 154). Although economic realism dictated that Sweden establish ties with Europe, full membership was dismissed. Europe was seen as undemocratic, furthermore, some stated that it was not “real” internationalism, unlike Swedish foreign policy (ibid.: 155). Finally, and decisively, EU membership was seen as threatening Swedish non-alignment (ibid.: 160). However, the end of the superpower struggle opened up a larger room for Sweden to manoeuvre in international politics.

After a heated battle and a fairly small victory during a national referendum on EU membership (52.3 per cent voted for Swedish membership in the EU), Sweden finally joined in 1995. Since then, much has happened with Swedish foreign policy and foreign policy identity. Sweden has joined the common foreign and security policy and the ESDP. Its foreign policy has been “europeanised” (Bjereld et al. 2008: 326), which can be defined as a process through which domestic political structures (both legal structures and cognitive structures) are adapted following European pressure (Rieker 2006: 12). Stable traits of Swedish foreign policy identity such as military non-alignment and internationalism have not been discarded, but have been subject to pressure and adaptation. The pressure has not only come from outside, through globalisation, regionalisation and the end of the Cold War. There has also been a shift inside of Sweden. Historically the Social Democrats have been relatively more preoccupied with the UN and the third world whereas the non-socialist parties, in particular the Moderates (Conservatives) have been eager to foster stronger relationships with the US and other NATO countries (see Bjereld et al. 2008; Mattsson

2010). Since the end of the Cold War, the Social Democrats have gradually lost much of their support, and therefore their pre-eminence over Swedish foreign policy.

Despite EU-membership and its engagement in the ESDP, Sweden has formally held on to its doctrine of military non-alignment. The Treaty of Lisbon takes consideration of this: In the amended Section 2 of the Treaty on the European Union, Provisions on the Common Security and Defence Policy, paragraph 7 states that “[i]f a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. *This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States.*” [my italics] Despite this clause, representatives of both sides of the political echelon have stated that it would be unlikely that Sweden should refuse to intervene if an EU member state were attacked (Färm & Wallström 2004: 105-106; Carl Bildt blogg 2 June 2008). Furthermore, on 16 June 2009 the Swedish Parliament approved a new defence proposition from the Government which suggested a new “solidarity declaration” which stated that

Sweden will not remain passive in case a catastrophe or attack should harm another [EU] member state or Nordic country. We expect that these countries act in the same manner in case Sweden should be harmed. (Swedish Government Prop. 2008/09:140: 29)

The defence proposition, which sets the direction for the Swedish defence policy 2010-2014, does not mention “military non-alignment”. Rather, it states that neutrality in case of (unlikely) war in Europe would be impossible because of Swedish solidarity towards European security (Swedish Government Prop. 2008/09:140: 30). However, it also underlines the fact that the EU is a “political” alliance. As late as in July 2010, two months ahead of general elections, the Conservative Minister of Defence Sten Tolgfors entered into a debate with the opposition Left party leader Lars Ohly in the tabloid news

paper Aftonbladet. The issue of contention was Sweden's relationship to NATO, in which both sides claimed that they were the best guarantee for a reliable military non-alignment (Aftonbladet 17 July 2010; Aftonbladet 22 July 2010).

Summarised, europeanisation has led to the former policy of military non-alignment with the aim of neutrality in case of war to be more and more altered, and perhaps emptied of its content. According to Minister of Foreign Affairs Bildt, today the term is used to say that Sweden is not a member of NATO (Carl Bildt blogg 2 June 2008). However, a large part of the public seems to believe in the continued importance of Swedish military non-alignment. In the annual opinion poll commissioned by the Swedish National Board of Psychological Defence, 51 per cent of respondents state that Swedish military non-alignment positively influences Swedish security, compared to 23 per cent who believe that it is of no importance at all. And although an increasingly large portion of respondents support future Swedish membership in NATO<sup>5</sup>, slightly more respondents wished to stay military non-aligned (Swedish National Board of Psychological Defence 2010). On a similar note, at the annual conference on Swedish security and defence politics arranged by the organisation *Folk och Försvar* in January 2010, the three main opposition parties unveiled a common platform in which they stated that Sweden should show solidarity in case of an attack on a Nordic or EU state *and* remain militarily non-aligned (Rödgröna 2010).

Interestingly, Sweden has been one of the main drivers behind the ESDP. Together with also military non-aligned Finland it lobbied for the inclusion of the Petersberg tasks in the Amsterdam Treaty and Sweden has contributed troops to several ESDP missions (Rieker 2006: 72). This has been interpreted as an attempt by Sweden to influence the ESDP so to steer it away from development towards a EU collective defence, and to rather having the union focus on international conflict management (Gustavsson 2006: 265-266; Rieker 2006: 72-73). Sweden has also worked hard to establish and strengthen EU civilian capacities (Andersson 2005: 17). Swedish focus on

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<sup>5</sup> There was a small negative change from 36 to 35 per cent of respondents in favour of NATO-membership 2008-2009, however the long-term trend is clearly positive.

international conflict management can in turn be seen in light of its internationalist identity, but which also has been influenced by Swedish EU membership. As stated earlier on, during the 1980s Sweden voted on the side of the third world as often as they did on the side of the West in the UN. In 2000-2001, however, Sweden sided with the West in 86 per cent of all votes (Sjöstedt 2002).

Let us lastly look at Sweden's identity vis-à-vis Africa, as this relates to the two operations that will be considered later on. Sweden has, as mentioned, had interest in Africa through its development policy. However, over the last couple of decades, the international community has moved towards linking development to good governance and security in a more holistic approach. This also informs the European Commission agenda in Africa (Bagoyoko & Gibert 2007). In addition to the Balkans, Africa has been the main focus of the ESDP missions. Sweden's Africa-policy is also subject to europeanisation, and Sweden has stepped up its military involvement on the African continent (ibid.: 24).

Swedish identity is still mainly of a benevolent aid-enthusiast. Or as stated in a publication which was written in connection with the Nordic Africa Institute's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary:

With no colonial past or other political or economic objectives, Sweden has, to a large extent, been able to channel its support to a considerable degree to the poorest countries and to strengthen the multilateral system. Solidarity has been the ultimate reason for the aid allowing for relatively high aid allocations and low tying of the aid to Swedish goods and services. (Wohlgemuth 2002: 46)

However, now Sweden is europeanising its Africa policy to harmonise it with those countries that Sweden has both blamed for neither being impartial nor particularly humanitarian in their approach to the African continent.



### **3.1.4 The Swedish Soldier and Appropriate Behaviour**

Summarising, the Swedish foreign policy identity is characterised by internationalism, continued yet somewhat weakened military non-alignment, and growing europeanisation. Although Swedish foreign policy identity is collective, it also works its way down to the individual soldier.

Both Swedish decision-makers and Swedish soldiers in formulating and implementing foreign and security policy are expected to behave according to the same norms that hold for Swedish foreign policy in general. On Swedish troops abroad, their efficiency and high morale has often been highlighted. During the Congo Crisis in the early 1960s, one statement read that “the mission demanded an Indian battalion, an Irish company or a Swedish platoon” (Lundgren 2009: 70). Furthermore, one author has written that “[t]he Swedes were recognised as good and calm soldiers with the ability to act independently in small units” (ibid.).

The implication of a decent Swedish society must not be underestimated. Soldiers of all ranks have from Sweden an image of how the future can be like for the victims in a conflict area. They have the ability of perceiving nuances and a sensitivity for what is right in a complex situation. (ibid.: 90)

According to Johansson, Swedish principles and values “such as respect for international law, the rights of smaller or weaker states, non-aggression, tolerance, and human rights”, which are a product of Swedish historical experiences, have to a large extent permeated the Swedish educational system. Thereby Swedish peacekeepers have also been influenced by these principles and values (Johansson 2001: 3-4). Another trait of Swedish society and defence that has influenced its peacekeepers is the fact that it has historically relied on compulsory military service and voluntary defence organisations (ibid.). Swedish soldiers participating in operations abroad do so on a voluntary basis. This in turn has led to soldiers with a higher average age, a civilian

background and a better ability to relate to the civilian population, according to Egnell (2009: 277-278).

This image of the good Swedish soldier has been reflected by the media during more than half a century, according to Olof Santesson. He writes that “Swedish mass media have on the whole willingly adhered to the military professionals’ slightly propagandistic thesis that [Sweden] has “the world’s best soldiers” in units recruited on voluntary ground from the stock of conscripts” (Santesson 2009: 310-311). Although the Armed Forces are in process of moving away from conscription, it still characterises and influences the troops sent abroad.

### **3.2 *Discourses, Operation Artemis and EUFOR Tchad/RCA***

The pretext and context surrounding a peace operation provide necessary conditions for calling forth a particular discourse with which to frame the political issue and debate. A short presentation will be done of the immediate background for the two case studies.

The Ituri province of the DRC has been a volatile and conflict-stricken region for years. Several groups of militias and government armies have fought for the plentiful natural resource in the region, leaving the local population to carry costs of warfare. Although the DRC has been scene to the largest UN peace operation so far, MONUC, it has not been able to pacify the large country. Initially authorised at 5500 soldiers, MONUC has later been expanded and by the end of 2009 it stood at about 20 000. It has since been downscaled and, from 1 July 2010 onwards, renamed MONUSCO.

The Ituri region was destabilised following the withdrawal of around 7 000 Ugandan soldiers in Spring 2003 (Ulriksen, Gourlay & Mace 2004). 16 May 2003 the UN Security Council passed resolution 1484 which authorised the deployment of an Interim Emergency Multinational Force in Bunia. The force was mandated to “to contribute to the stabilization of the security conditions and the improvement of the humanitarian situation in Bunia, to ensure the protection of the airport, the internally displaced persons in the camps in Bunia and, if the situation requires it, to contribute to

the safety of the civilian population, United Nations personnel and the humanitarian presence in the town” (United Nations Security Council 2003).

The European Council then mandated a EU military operation through a joint action on 5 June 2003. France, which had proposed an interim force to the UN Secretary-General in the first place, was made Framework Nation for the operation and provided the great bulk of the 1800 men and women that were to form it. However, a few other countries also provided troops (some even non-EU countries), among which was Sweden. The Swedish Government decided to participate in the operation and on 10 June it presented a proposition to Parliament, which was adopted in committee and plenary session within two days. From July to September 2003 some ninety men and women from the Swedish Special Forces participated in Operation Artemis.

Sweden participated in another peace operation in the DRC under EU command three years later: EUFOR RD Congo. This will not be covered in this study; rather I will look at EUFOR Tchad/RCA. Chad and the Central African Republic have had more than their fair share of problems of their own during the last decade, including coups and civil unrest. According to the Swedish Government proposition recommending Swedish participation in EUFOR Tchad/RCA, Chad has been “plagued by civil unrest and autocratic rule during almost its whole existence since independence from France in 1960” (Swedish Government Prop. 2007/08:14: 5).

Additionally as a main precursor to the EU operation, both Chad and the CAR border Darfur, and have as a consequence had great influx of refugees from that region. Both countries are former French colonies, and on French initiative again, 25 September 2007 the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1778 authorising the deployment of a multidimensional presence. The force was mandated “to help create the security conditions conducive to a voluntary, secure and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons, inter alia by contributing to the protection of refugees, displaced persons and civilians in danger, by facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance in eastern Chad and the north-eastern Central African Republic and by creating

favourable conditions for the reconstruction and economic and social development of those areas” (United Nations Security Council 2007).

The European Council authorised the deployment of EUFOR Tchad/RCA by its joint action 2007/677/CFSP on 15 October. Three days later the Swedish Government forwarded a proposal to Parliament to contribute troops to the mission. Around 200 men and women were committed for half a year, making Sweden the fourth largest troop contributor. Following a heated public debate, which will be covered later on, the Swedish contribution was later extended by a new Government proposal. France contributed around half of all the troops to the operation.

### **3.2.1 Discourse relating to the Country and Cause for Intervention**

Before looking at the immediate discourse surrounding the country in question at the time of intervention, we can look at the discourse at the *intermediate* level: Africa and Swedish relationship vis-à-vis Africa. When the Swedish Government presented its new strategic Africa policy on 12 March 2008, Minister for Development Cooperation Gunilla Carlsson stated that ”Africa is so much more than hunger, armed conflict and a lack of democracy and human rights” (Swedish Government 12 March 2008).

The document stated that it took as its point of departure the positive developments experienced by Africa during the last decade (Swedish Government Skr. 2007/08:67: 1). ”Growth is accelerating, democracy is getting more profound and in previously war-plagued areas increasing stability now reigns. Poverty, oppression and conflict are still extensive and represent an obstacle against development, and in several areas the continent is trailing behind. But the positive tendencies dominate in many parts. A stronger Africa is growing forward and the African self-consciousness is increasing” (ibid.: 4). The previous strategic Africa policy was presented on 5 March 1998. Its first chapter was entitled “New points of departure” and read the following:

A new Africa is beginning to take form. Societies are opening up and democratisation is accelerating. Economic reforms, deregulation and trade

liberalisation has started. After a long period of decline we can see a remarkable economic recovery. For many poor people their living standard is improving. The new age has resulted in quick changes, difficult readjustments, virulent confrontations as unresolved conflicts resurface –but also hope of bringing Africa forward. After development that during the 1970s and 1980s went in the wrong direction, the democratic, economic and social improvements today are real for many people. Ahead of the new century there are reasons to hope for an ‘African renaissance’. (Swedish Government Skr. 1997/98:122: 4)

Both documents also underline the need for or actual equality in the relationship between Africa and Sweden or the EU. Back in 1998, the Government stated that the aim of its new policy was to “develop a closer and more equal cooperation – partnership – between Sweden and Africa” (ibid.: 1). Later on in the 2008 document the Government then stated that “[t]he 2007 high summit between Africa and the EU was a manifestation of an equal relationship and of a mutual will to take on regional and global challenges and let common, strategic priorities lead the deepening cooperation” (Swedish Government Skr. 2007/08:67). Furthermore, both documents state that Africa is increasingly taking on the responsibility for its own development and security.

Whereas both the 1998 and the 2008 strategic documents repeat at length the positive developments experienced in Africa, they also admit the continuing problems; “Armed conflicts affect populations in several countries, the instability is great in certain regions. The population growth is high and the number of poor is increasing. Environmental damages and the spread of AIDS is a growing problem. Corruption is extensive and the management of resources must improve. The challenges are great for those who will lead Africa into a better age, but the will to proceed is remarkable” (Swedish Government Skr. 1997/98:122).

The media over-focuses on the negative images of Africa, according to the Swedish Government: “The prevalent dark image of a continent in crisis is merited in several specific situations. It is however far from totally describing, but rather bears

testimony of the mass media's tendency to focus on the catastrophic, the tragic – on immediate pictures rather than analysis and continuity” (ibid.: 9). This image is repeated though by politicians, such as during the parliamentary debate following the release of the 1998 Africa policy. The first MP to speak began her statement by saying that “[a] great deal of Africa’s population live in absolute poverty. People go to sleep hungry. Sickness, poor health and premature death are everyday phenomena. In yesterday’s TV-Rapport [program] we were reminded that for example 50 000 persons in southern Sudan are at risk of starving to death” (Swedish Parliament 25 May 1998).

The intermediate discourse constrains and influences the immediate, case-specific discourse. As mentioned earlier I will look at those two countries in which Sweden intervened militarily during the last decade: the DRC and Chad, both which experienced internal strife and the latter suffering from the spill-over effects from the civil war in Darfur in its neighbouring country Sudan. In the 1998 strategic policy on Africa, it was stated that “new conflicts have broken out, which have resulted in new acts of terror and sidelining of humanitarian law. Three of the continents largest and most populated countries, Nigeria, the DRC and Sudan, are currently characterised by to a varying degree a precarious situation for human rights. While a successive stabilisation of the Congo perhaps might be glimpsed, this hardly holds for the two other countries” (Swedish Government Skr. 1997/98:122: 19-20). Chad was not referred to in the document.

Swedish relationship with the Congo goes far back, to both military operations and missionary expeditions. The region to which the Swedish soldiers are sent was at some point described as ”the Swedish neighbourhood” of the Congo (DN 28 January 2003), due to the fact that it is the same region in which Swedish troops operated in the 1960s. Several of the other news articles carry titles such as “Swedish soldiers back in the Congo” (ibid.) or “Swedish blue berets back in the Congo” (DN 5 June 2003).

During the parliamentary debate preceding the passing of the Government proposal, representatives of all the political parties went on at lengths to express how dire the situation in the DRC was. One of the most illustrative descriptions of the

situation was performed by a liberal MP, herself born in the Congo, whose account of the situation was applauded for bringing understanding of the situation in the DRC to the Parliament. Several of the MPs repeated during the debate how a high number of persons had been killed during the last years, and although Sweden's contribution could not bring peace to the country, it could still be of great help to the peace process (Swedish Parliament 12 June 2003).

The actual task to be performed by of the Swedish contingent was to protect and manage the airport in Kindu. The Government made explicit the merits and potential risks in intervening as it wrote that it considers "the over-arching goal of the EU-mission; to stop violations against the civilian population, to improve the humanitarian situation as well as to support the efforts of the UN and the peace process in the DR Congo, well motivate the political and military risks that the operation entails" (Swedish Government Prop. 2002/03:143: 14).

While it has been seen as a troubled country for a long time, Swedish discourse surrounding the DRC has in the last few years been tightly linked to the concept of sexual violence. In its 2008 strategic Africa policy, the Swedish Government writes that the conflict in the DRC has shown the extent of sexual violence against women. The topic is discussed both under the heading of "peace and security" as well as "democracy and human rights". The issue was only summarily mentioned in the 1998 strategic policy, and likewise in the Parliamentary debate preceding Operation Artemis in 2003. By the time of the new strategic policy for Africa from 2008, the issue had taken on more prominence: "In conflict areas there are furthermore cases of a systematic practice of sexual violence particularly against women, but even girls and boys. The conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has shown the extent and consequences of sexual violence" (Swedish Government Skr. 2007/08:67: 16).

After describing the situation in the DRC, the 2008 document went on to state that "[y]et another vulnerable group in and around the conflict areas is refugees and internal refugees. The situation for the refugees can be so serious that it can result in a humanitarian crisis and further conflict, such as in Darfur/Sudan and eastern Chad"

(ibid.). Chad is generally a more obscure country to the Swedish population than the DRC is. Sweden had little direct diplomatic or development-related cooperation with Chad ahead of mobilisation. The general tone of the Government's description of the situation in the country is one of a fractured post-colonial country mired in civil and ethnic strife (see Swedish Government Prop. 2007/08:14: 4-5). Graphic vocabulary was also employed during the parliamentary debate on the possible extension of the Swedish presence, as when one Left MP stated that she had heard the situation in Chad described as "hell on earth" (Swedish Parliament 5 March 2008).

Foci are on the situation for the refugees and in particular the situation of women. However, women are not just evoked to in terms of victims, but also stakeholders. Although the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women in conflict was passed already in 2000, before Operation Artemis, it was given much more attention during debates surrounding participation in EUFOR Tchad/RCA. Representatives from several political parties raised the importance of the resolution during discussions (Swedish Parliament 21 November 2007).

The situation in Chad is closely connected to the situation in Sudan, which was at the time better known for the media coverage of the conflict in Darfur. At the same time as participation in EUFOR Tchad/RCA was being discussed, there were also plans for a Swedish contingent to Darfur (which later on was stopped by the Sudanese Government). Both the Government and the MPs of the various parties stressed the regional dimension of the conflict in Chad, and its connection to the situation in Darfur. As an example, a Social Democratic MP and spokesperson for foreign affairs stated EUFOR Tchad/RCA "shall be directed towards Chad and the Central-African Republic to protect refugees. There are half a million refugees in the area, and most of them have arrived from Darfur. The operation *raison d'être* is to calm down and stabilise the area, something which can have bearings on a solution of the conflict in Darfur, but can also help the refugees return" (ibid.).

The tendency to merge protection of refugees in Chad with intervening in the Darfur conflict was also seen in the media. The daily newspaper Svenska Dagbladet



(SvD) printed an article on 27 September which stated in its introduction that “Sweden may send 200 conflict-ready soldiers under EU-flag to protect refugees from the genocide in Darfur”. However, while this tendency seems apparent, most statements by the media and politicians focussed on the situation for the half million or so refugees *in* the eastern parts of Chad (without any reference to their origin or what caused them to flee), the need to open up humanitarian access to them and improve the security situation in the area. In other words, the operation was overwhelmingly framed as a humanitarian one, as opposed to political. This picture seems also to be supported by the media, in particular by anecdotal news reports such as one which stated that “[i]t is refugees such as Bakhata and Jallal [interviewed refugees] that the Swedish EUFOR-soldiers in Chad are going to protect, as a part of an operation of about 3500 European soldiers until March 2009” (DN 18 May 2008). Also voices abroad reiterated such a view, as when the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Guterres was quoted saying that the mission of EUFOR Tchad/RCA was humanitarian, not political (SvD 5 February 2008).

The CAR, which also received EU soldiers as a part of EUFOR Tchad/RCA, is seldom mentioned by the Government, opposition and media. Furthermore, Swedish soldiers were stationed in Chad, and not the CAR. In the Government proposition which first suggested that Sweden should participate in EUFOR Tchad/RCA, the CAR is described as an unstable country. However the country is given less attention than Chad in the proposition, as would be repeated in 2008 when the Government proposed an extension of the operation. The latter document states that “[t]here is a clear connection between the situation [in Chad] and the situation in Darfur and eastern Chad” (Swedish Government Prop. 2007/08:157: 6). It goes on to describe the northwestern parts of the country as lawless and that there are cases of serious violations against the civilian population (*ibid.*).

Summarised, the discourse surrounding Africa and Swedish-African relations has been stable throughout the last decade, but with certain modifications. While positive images are stressed, negative images of the continent and relevant countries remain and

dominate entirely when possible cases of intervention are discussed. New issues, such as women's participation, are added onto the already existing list in a mostly programmatic way. And finally, the cases at hand are made more available to the reader by way of connection with past operations or more familiar conflicts in the same region.

### **3.2.2 Self-Image Discourse I: Country-Level**

The next discourse to be investigated is Swedish self-image. As mentioned earlier on in this chapter, the deepest level; the fundamental identity; has been discussed in the previous chapter. At the intermediate level we have discourses surrounding Swedish participates in peace operations in general, and what relationship Sweden has with Africa. The latter has been touched upon, but merits a closer look still. In the 1998 strategic Africa policy the reader is told that “[s]olidarity is the foundation for the Swedish Africa-policy. It has its point of departure the human responsibility to give a hand to those less fortunate” (Swedish Government Skr. 1997/98:122: 81). We are also presented the historical development of Sweden's engagement in Africa, with particular focus on Swedish “sympathy and engagement” in the “Africans fight for liberation during the 1950s and 1960s...” (ibid.: 50). According to the document, “[t]he lack of a colonial past and strategic great power interests have contributed to Sweden, in many forums, being able to act the role as an impartial promoter of solidarity with the vulnerable African peoples” (ibid.).

Ten years later, in the new Swedish policy towards Africa we essentially find much repetition from the 1998 document:

Sweden's long history of close cooperation with Africa gives a special platform and good premises for a clear Swedish Africa-policy. Swedish support in connection with the countries' liberation struggles as well as an extensive political and economic support to them thereafter characterises the image of Sweden in many parts of Africa. The fact that Sweden lacks a colonial past in Africa and has a

northern-European model of society that inspires many African countries, together give Sweden good opportunities to influence, cooperation and act.

Sweden's ability to take on global challenges, engagement in the climate issue, openness to free trade and the liberalisation of the EU common agricultural policy, extensive support for peacekeeping operations, world-leading development aid, a large number of enterprises that are to the benefit for Africa's development, engaged individual organisations and increasing number of Africans living in Sweden are the foundations for, and some of Sweden's comparative advantages in the shaping and implementation of, an Africa-policy. Sweden's membership in the EU and active UN engagement gives us yet more premises to act in common in the prioritised areas. The Government pushes development within the EU, a central actor in relationship with Africa. (Swedish Government Skr. 2007/08:67: 20-21)

While the above sketches out the general self-image of Sweden's relationship towards Africa, we can also look at Swedish self-image as a contributing nation to peace operations. In the Government's strategic policy for participation in international operations of 13 March 2008, one can read that

[t]he ultimate goal of Sweden's engagement in international peace-promoting operations is to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security and thereby supporting a fair and sustainable development. Swedish participation in peace-promoting operations is also, in extension, about promoting our national security and Swedish interests.

The foundation is the defence of a number of universal norms and values, such as democracy, human rights, equality, human dignity and development. Additionally, our participation in operations contribute to protecting and promoting over-arching interests such as a global order, with its base in international law, to achieve peace, freedom and reconciliation[...]

Swedish engagement is an expression of our solidarity in action with those persons and countries that are threatened by conflict[...]

Sweden's participation in peace- and security-promoting operations shall always be founded on international law. Protection of and respect for international law, including human rights and the international humanitarian law, is central... Sweden shall work towards incorporating the responsibility to protect populations against grave violations of the international humanitarian law and human rights in all phases of peace-promoting operations. (ibid.: 4)

Sweden is at several instances presented as taking the lead in initiating the two peace operations in question. In the parliamentary debate preceding Operation Artemis, one MP stated that Sweden, by sending troops to MONUC, had paved the way for a European engagement in the Congo. Another MP on a similar note stated that "Europe has for a long time not shown any interest for what is happening in the Congo. But since Sweden a few weeks ago decided to take the lead and send a force to Bunia, more countries are taking an interest, such as France and the UK to mention some" (Swedish Parliament 12 June 2003). At the same time, at least one news article presented a different picture of situation. An article from SvD stated that

[t]he Swedish participation in [EUFOR RD Congo] is already counted in by the great powers... 'It is almost unthinkable that Sweden will not join in. Should Sweden not participate, the UK and France would find it extraordinarily strange. We are seen as a given participant in one way or another,' says a Swedish diplomat. (SvD 5 March 2004)

In the context of EUFOR Tchad/RCA, Minister of Defence Sten Tolgfors stated that the Swedes were "*enablers* [stated in English in the original]... both politically and militarily" (Swedish Parliament 5 March 2008). The stated crucial role of the Swedish contingent is also evoked outside of the initiating phase of the operation. One such instance is a news article in SvD entitled "Swedes to save EU-troop", which then goes on to stating that "Sweden's troops in Chad will be the EU fire-fighters that will come to the aid of other countries' contingents" (SvD 6 February 2008).

Media reports from the two peace operations often reiterate the official cause for military intervention. “Sweden has sent down [to Chad] about 200 soldiers in order to help create stability and security in one of the most volatile parts of Africa,” stated in the daily Dagens Nyheter (DN) on 16 June 2008, is one of many such examples. Sometimes Swedish soldiers are interviewed in a personal manner where they detail their own reasons for participating. In one newspaper portrait of an officer ahead of deployment to Chad, we are told that he joined the army because he was willing to die to defend Sweden, his family or friends, and that he was now willing to do the same to protect refugees and aid workers deep into Africa [sic] (SvD 1 October 2007). Several similar reports are made, in particular by the daily tabloid Aftonbladet whose reporter followed the forces to Chad and wrote a blog from the area. On 28 February she wrote the following post:

‘If I can help a single person it is worth going.’ So said Emir Kadric, a soldier who is now on the way to Chad. The Swedish infantry company know that their contribution is important; half a million refugees from Darfur depend on the rest of the world to survive[...] (Aftonbladet 28 February 2008)

Further below I will look more closely at how Swedish soldiers are portrayed in general. There are very few examples of interviews with the purported recipients of aid, i.e. civilians and refugees, being interviewed.

Another prominent aspect in the discourses surrounding Swedish participation in peace operations is legal considerations. Propositions and considerations made by both the Government and opposition spend a lot of time arguing how the operation in question conforms to international law. E.g., in the proposition suggesting Swedish participation in Operation Artemis, chapter 6 (of 7) is entitled “Legal questions”;

The member states of the EU have according to the treaty a right, but no obligation, to participate in the union’s crisis management. Each member state decides

whether, and in such a case in what way, the state in question will participate. A precondition for Swedish participation in crisis management operations is that the operation is founded on international law. Sweden makes in every single case and in accordance with Swedish law the decision about participation in a crisis management operation.

With regards to the question of the international legal regulation, the following can be mentioned. A precondition for a Swedish participation in the EU-led military crisis management operation in the DR Congo is thus that the mission mandate and the military intervention is done in accordance with international law[...] (Swedish Government Prop. 2002/03:143: 12)

The proposition continues in the same tone, and similarly, chapter 7 out of 8 in the proposition suggesting participation in EUFOR Tchad/RCA and chapter 6 out of 6 in the proposition suggesting an extension of that same contingent discuss the legal aspects of the operations. Also the Parliamentary committee considerations of the propositions address legal issues extensively. Much of the same discussion is then reiterated in the Parliamentary debate by representatives of the whole spectrum of political parties. One particularly illustrative quote is from a Left MP who stated in the debate preceding EUFOR Tchad/RCA that “[t]he mission has been authorised through the adoption of Security Council resolution 1778 and through the EU being in this resolution given the assignment to contribute with a military force. The mission as a whole has thereby a mandate in accordance with existing international law and the legitimacy that a decision in the UN gives” (Swedish Parliament 21 November 2007). Preoccupation with international law seems to be linked to Swedish preoccupation with the UN. The UN and its Security Council are, as in statements as the one above, evoked in discussions surrounding the legitimacy of the military interventions.

Aside from the legal considerations made, there are also moral issues raised. Several politicians from the Government as well as the opposition, and the media refer to not only what Sweden can do, but also what it *should* do; its moral obligations. In

proposing Swedish participation in EUFOR Tchad/RCA, the Government writes that such a contingent would be a strong example of the country taking its “share of the collective obligation towards contributing to a better protection for vulnerable civilians” (Swedish Government Prop. 2007/08:14: 12). During the parliamentary debate surrounding Operation Artemis, a member of the Centre Party stated that Sweden should “cloak [itself] in [its] international responsibility” (Swedish Parliament 21 November 2007). In debating the extension of the Swedish contingent to EUFOR Tchad/RCA, a Left MP criticised the Minister of Defence, stating that:

[i]n this difficult situation the Minister of Defence and the Government in fact stand by aborting part of the common mission during the summer despite the request from the UN and the EU that Sweden should take its responsibility and let our Swedish troops complete the mission[...] They [Swedish soldiers] will complete Sweden’s tradition of, in an honourable and professional way, contribute to peace and security in a conflict-ridden area. (Swedish Parliament 5 March 2008)

Other opinion-makers like NGOs also evoked Sweden’s obligations, such as in an op-ed in Sweden’s largest daily newspaper 30 December 2008. There the head of the Swedish UN association argued that Sweden should also send troops to Chad through a UN operation because “Sweden is also a country that confesses to the principle that the international society has an obligation to protect civilian populations from violation when the state in which they live cannot or will not offer them protection” (DN 30 December 2008).

The discourse however is not undifferentiated. Ahead of Operation Artemis and in particular EUFOR Tchad/RCA, there are several examples of Sweden’s relationship and position vis-à-vis other EU member states taking on importance. E.g., the 2008 strategic policy for participation in international operations states that Swedish engagement in the ESDP, both in terms of conceptual development and troops on the ground, has made the country a credible and influential country (Swedish Government

2007/08:51: 4). Even earlier on when the Government recommended Swedish participation in Operation Artemis, the proposition stated that not only would such a contingent contribute to the security in the area, but it would also show Sweden's will to further develop the EU's crisis management capabilities (Swedish Government Prop. 2002/03:143: 14). The earlier mentioned Aftonbladet blogger wrote the following on 17 December 2007:

When one poses the question why Sweden is going to send soldiers abroad, the answer is always that our country has a long tradition of helping others, and that it is important to make a contribution for those in need.

However another part of the truth is that if Sweden wants influence in the EU and the world the country has to be ready to pay up. To send peacekeeping and/or peace enforcing troops is therefore a way for Sweden to be included and to be taken seriously.

So when Nisse [a soldier] protects aid convoys in Africa he is not only implementing a humanitarian mission, but is also a small piece in a geopolitical game[...] (Aftonbladet 17 December 2007)

However, while the consideration of Sweden's international position is acknowledged, it generally seems to take on a secondary importance. As stated in the blog post above, firstly the humanitarian aspects and obligations are stressed, and secondary auxiliary considerations. In the Parliamentary committee considerations regarding Swedish participation in EUFOR Tchad/RCA, also stated similarly elsewhere, one can read that

[t]he committee considers that Sweden through its contribution to the EU-led force in Chad and the Central-African Republic partly shows evidence of its continuing strong engagement for the UN and the multilateral-system, partly in concrete action contributes to heightening the security and possibility for return for the hundreds of thousands of persons in need that are currently in flight in both countries. (Swedish Parliament 2007/08:UFöU2)



At several times the opinion is expressed that the ESDP, and Swedish contribution towards it, is a positive force. During the parliamentary debate ahead of EUFOR Tchad/RCA, the following statement was made: “The operation is in many ways a positive example. We the Social Democrats and the great majority of the Swedish Parliament wanted the EU to develop a civilian and military capacity that could be placed at the disposal of the UN” (Swedish Parliament 21 November 2007). Another example can be found in the Government proposition recommending the extension of the same operation: “EUFOR Tchad/RCA means support to the UN’s crisis management capacity, which for Sweden is one of the ESDP’s most important tasks. The mission in Chad and the Central-African Republic is from this perspective a natural extension of the aspiration from the EU’s side to give a clear support to the UN’s missions” (Swedish Government Prop. 2007/08:157).

At the same time as both the Government and opposition have, explicitly or implicitly, expressed their positive opinion of the ESDP and Swedish support thereof, there are also several examples of opinion-makers consciously pointing at the difference between Sweden and other EU member states. As stated above, both strategic Africa policies stated that Sweden had a special relationship with the continent because it lacked a colonial past or great power strategic ambitions. These considerations were evoked in particular in connection with EUFOR Tchad/RCA. The most likely reason for this is that the French dominance of the operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA was seen as jeopardising the operations purported neutrality due to French colonial past and open support of the Chad Government.

The details of these debates surrounding EUFOR Tchad/RCA will be addressed in more detail later on. However, a couple of the initial statements made by the different parties in Parliament, all of which supported the operation eventually, are worth looking at in this context. In the debate preceding the operation in Chad, one Left MP stated that “[t]he military force shall be impartial between the combating parties... The Swedish contingent’s neutrality must be undisputable.” Furthermore she added that “I believe that Sweden which has not had any colonies could contribute with diplomacy and a

constructive discussion about how one can solve problems in the future” (Swedish Parliament 21 November 2007). Another MP, from the Green Party, stated that “Sweden must not become a part of a European neo-colonial expedition corps in order to acquire natural resources for multinational enterprises. And I don’t believe that will be the case... It is therefore important that the EU-force is under no circumstances seen as a party actor to this conflict” (ibid.). The concepts of “impartiality” and “neutrality” are used interchangeably, though mostly by politicians from centre- and left-leaning parties. Representatives of these stressed at several times Sweden’s lack of a colonial history and the necessity to stay neutral, though no other party dismissed this consideration outright either.

In short, the discourses surrounding Swedish participation at the country-level are very much dominated by references to Sweden’s historical internationalism, lack of colonial past and ties with Africa. Although considerations of the country’s relations with the rest of the EU are raised, the view that Sweden’s actions are morally and legally unquestionable dominates.

### **3.2.3 Self-Image Discourse II: Swedish Troops and Others**

We move on from the discourses relating to Sweden as a whole to look at the discourses relating to Swedish troops, and conversely, those of other nationalities. If we first look at the more intermediate level, peace operations in general, we find that the Government’s strategic policy for participation in international operations of 13 March 2008 only shortly mentioned the particular role, responsibilities and actions of the Swedish troops. It stated that “[p]ersonnel in peace-promoting missions shall abide by applicable rules as follow of the human rights and humanitarian law, as well as the normative and ethical guidelines that have been prepared for peace-promoting missions” (Swedish Government Skr. 2007/08:51: 9). During the Parliamentary committee consideration of the same strategic policy though, the Social Democrats had prepared a motion where they highlighted the need for the strategy to include guidelines for how the National Defence Forces are to react when problems of a legal or ethical nature arise

in international operations where Swedish troops participate. The motion further stated that “[w]e Social Democrats want to highlight the importance of our soldiers being instructed and educated in acting in accordance with existing directives and respect those values that they are sent out to defend” (Swedish Parliament 2007/08:U18). The immediate stated pretext for this part of the motion was the recent allegations that Swedish soldiers had witnessed torture done by French EU-troops during Operation Artemis in 2003. The next chapter will look more closely at this case. The Parliamentary Committee majority dismissed the motion though, stating that it considered it “self-evident that Swedish personnel in peace-promoting missions shall abide by applicable rules that follow from the human rights and humanitarian law, as well as the normative and ethical guidelines that have been prepared for peace-promoting missions” (Swedish Parliament 2007/08:UFöU4: 11).

There are several examples of both politicians and the media acclaiming the high competence and skill of the Swedish soldiers. Aftonbladet’s blogging reporter wrote *inter alia* the following from Chad:

During lunch I met a French, rather high-ranking officer who worked with the Swedes. (He didn’t want me to write his name.)

He drank a beer to his beef with rice and poured praise over the Swedish company, said that they were very professional and superb to work with[...]

Fact is that the amphibian company is very flexible to work with, even for a journalist. Among them are neither any difficult bureaucrats who do not dare to do anything without the consent of a higher-ranking officer, nor any sagging surly person.

It might be possible that I, as a journalist, have been treated particularly well, but during the days I’ve lived with the soldiers they have all shown themselves as helpful problem-solvers. Additionally they have a sick sense of humour, which is always a benefit. (Aftonbladet 25 March 2008)

Another post read that “[t]he ambiance is good and we solve our tasks [not specified if “we” includes the journalist]. The security situation in the country is unstable which means that one must be extra careful but at the same time not provocative. The Swedish soldiers curiosity and openness gives a lot and is appreciated. It benefits us in the long run. It is nice to see that one has succeeded in making oneself understood by a child who comes forward and is curious” (Aftonbladet 27 March 2008).

In connection with Sweden’s participation in Operation Artemis, then-Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces Johan Hederstedt stated that the Swedish forces were ”mature enough for any task” (DN 21 November 2003). Similarly former Lieutenant-General Johan Kihl stated that the Swedish troops were far superior to any local forces they might meet in the Eastern Congo (SvD 14 June 2003). In an interview with a Swedish officer on the country’s participation in the DRC, Aftonbladet wrote:

[Journalist:] Sweden has almost always answered the calls of the UN. Do Swedish soldiers and officers enjoy a good reputation among other countries’ militaries?

[Officer:] Very good. And it is a result of our conscription. We choose talented, motivated soldiers and then the best of them continue on to UN service.  
(Aftonbladet 21 July 2003)

After Operation Artemis, Sweden sent another contingent to the DRC as a part of EUFOR RC Congo, in preparation of which Sveriges Radio (SR) reported that

The top-secret Swedish special force SSG is rewarded highest distinction for its latest operation in the Congo recently. Even though the Swedes were never put into battle, the EU-operations German commander says that they were his trump card in the Congo.

The Swedish profile is praised even by the EU’s political leaders.

‘The Swedish troops were an example for the other member states with regards to professionalism and common sense, said the EU’s high-representative Javier Solana in Stockholm 7 December. (SvD 27 December 2006)

The quality of the Swedish troops was also mentioned several times in connection with EUFOR Tchad/RCA. Tactical chief Jonas Wikström was quoted saying that the first Swedish force to arrive in Chad earned itself a good reputation, both at headquarters and among other national force contingents, for its efficiency and ability to solve problems quickly (Swedish Armed Forces 3 November 2008).

Politicians and the media often focussed on their particular humanitarian approach. Sometimes anecdotes were presented, such as how Swedes included local Congolese in rebuilding the school. It was reportedly unique of a military force to do something similar and it had earned the Swedes a "top position in popularity in Kindu" (SvD 5 September 2003). The military also reported how some Swedish soldiers had saved a young Chadian man from drowning, the news of which quickly spread in the village (Swedish Armed Forces 11 August 2008).

In somewhat contradiction to this perceived humanitarian nature of the Swedish troops stands the demand that aid and the military need to stay separated, so that aid workers are not confused with foreign forces. In the parliamentary debate preceding EUFOR Tchad/RCA, a Liberal MP stated that he "d[id] not think that the military should distribute aid," and that he "dare[d] claim that the Swedish military had no such ambition in that regard" (Swedish Parliament 21 November 2007). A Left MP added that Sweden must not present conditional help to the recipients, "such as one has heard about in other examples." She also stated that "[w]e know that Sweden has never done it and will never consider joining in on it either" (ibid.)

Other reports stressed the Swedes moral integrity, such as Aftonbladet's blogger who wrote that "Swedish soldiers have a good reputation abroad, they are good at building relations with people in place and take their task seriously. And neither do they let themselves be bribed, nor sell their equipment nor have as a custom to visit brothels, like some other countries' soldiers do from time to time" (Aftonbladet 29 January 2008). Conversely, Swedish media reported a few months later that Swedish soldiers had had sex with prostitutes in Gabon (Expressen 6 May 2008), and later another story broke out that some had visited a brothel in Germany (Aftonbladet 9 October 2009).

The descriptions of the Swedish soldiers sometimes include, implicitly or explicitly, a comparison with other countries' forces. One newspaper correspondent in Chad wrote that "[i]n Abéche the streets are now patrolled by Swedish soldiers that are getting to know the local population. They have already noted that the Swedish EU soldiers differ from the those of the former coloniser France through their lighter colour" (SvD 17 April 2008). However the last statement's claim that the local population differentiated the Swedes from the other national contingents might have deserved a certain degree of modification. The Swedish daily SvD printed an interview with a Swedish lieutenant colonel in which the following passage could be read:

[Journalist:] Have you been of any use?

[Lieutenant colonel:] Yes. The opinion expressed from senior level is that the Swedish soldiers are professional, positive and problem-solvers. Many officers have expressed that they are sorry to see us leave.

[Journalist:] What does the local population say then?

[Lieutenant colonel:] I don't think they differentiate from which EU country the soldiers originate. But where EUFOR is we solve the mission we've been given: to improve the security situation. Through our presence the aid organisations have been able to work. This benefits both the refugees from Sudan and the local population. In those places that we have been we have succeeded in that mission. There the aid organisations can safely work. But eastern Chad is enormous. 3500 EU soldiers can only cover but a small part of it. (SvD 8 October 2008)

In general, all sources depict a generalised, favourable image of the Swedish troops. They are assumed to have "Swedish" traits, such as high morals, a commitment to internationalism and professionalism. Furthermore, these characteristics are implicitly or explicitly in contrast to the traits of troops from other nationalities, such as France in this case.

## 4 Controversies and reactions

Soldiers are generally sent into war on a wave of support and belief in that the job will be well done. Swedish troops were sent into the DRC and Chad with opinion-makers expressing that they were there for the right reasons and would execute their mission professionally. The discursive context has already been covered.

But sometimes ideals and actions do not match up. Here I will investigate two of the largest controversies surrounding the cases at hand: Firstly, the allegation that Swedish troops witnessed torture done by fellow EU soldiers in the DRC without intervening or reporting the violation. Secondly, the claim that Sweden was, by participating in the French-dominated EUFOR Tchad/RCA operation, interfering in the internal political situation in Chad. By using the process-tracing method and discourse analysis, this chapter will look at the narrative for both allegations and the reactions they provoked.

### 4.1 *Torture in the DRC*

Operation Artemis was launched 12 June 2003 and ended officially on 1 September the same year. The operation was deemed successfully completed, though its effect has been disputed (see Ulriksen, Gourlay & Mace 2004: 519-520). Medals were exchanged between the Swedes and the French at the highest level (SVT 1 April 2008), and the French Minister of Defence Michèle Alliot-Marie stated to DN that

The previous summer's Franco-Swedish EU-mission in the Congo really showed Sweden's great military power[...]

Before [the operation] I thought that the Swedes were hesitant to military cooperation. Swedish politicians have always famously claimed their neutrality. But I must admit that I was positively surprised. We were much impressed by the soldiers' professionalism. (DN 25 September 2004)

Furthermore, Minister Alliot-Marie wrote an op.ed. in the Swedish newspaper SvD where she stated that the EU's defence had reached "undisputable operative credibility", and that Swedish soldiers "[w]ith their competence and their courage they contributed together with our troops to the EU's ability to save lives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo" (SvD 26 September 2004). Since then Sweden participated in another EU-led operation in the DRC, EUFOR RD Congo, as well the EU-led operation in Chad, EUFOR Tchad/RCA. Operation Artemis passed by as one of several peace operations in which Sweden had participated.

#### **4.1.1 Story Exposed**

25 March 2008 however, after the deployment of Swedish troops to Chad, Swedish public television, Sveriges Television (SVT), aired an episode of the program *Uppdrag Granskning* which claimed that several high-ranking Swedish officers had during the last five years kept secret about allegations that the Swedish Special Forces (SSG) had witnessed torture committed by EU-soldiers.

The incident had happened in July 2003, and involved a young Congolese man who had been caught close to the Swedish-French camp Chem Chem. The Congolese man was accused of belonging to a militia group, and was brought in for questioning. During that session, French soldiers allegedly subjected him to torture, including inter alia mock execution, for several hours. Swedish soldiers were not accused of actively performing the torture, and anonymous soldiers interviewed in the programme stated that they had reported to their commanding officer in place, Hans Alm. Alm, however, had reportedly not intervened to stop the torture. This allegation was disputed by the Swedish Armed Forces' Press Officer Magnergård. General Kihl, chief at Headquarters for the SSG and responsible for the Swedish contingent in Operation Artemis, claimed that he had heard about the incident only a year later. Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Håkan Syrén, had purportedly been informed in June 2006.

The Armed Forces, which were informed of SVT's investigation, wrote a statement a week ahead of the airing of the programme in which they informed that



international law had probably been violated during Operation Artemis. Chief legal advisor at the Armed Forces also stated that “torture-like methods” had been used. Press Officer Roger Magnergård was reported to have stated that the belated action was a result of the long investigation period. He further added that France had previously been informed of the torture allegation during Spring 2007, but had concluded from their first investigation that there were no indications of any wrongdoing. The Swedish Armed Forces had then offered the French their own investigation, after which the French Armed Forces had decided to re-investigate the claims (SVT 25 March 2008).

#### **4.1.2 Reactions**

The story was quickly picked up by the newspapers, several of which posted it on their websites the same day. The tabloid newspaper Aftonbladet posted an article entitled “Swedish military did not report torture” whereas the daily SvD posted the article “Swedish soldier reported torture”. Both articles contained essentially the same story, which was based on information from SVT as well as TT. In the next day’s printed newspapers, the story was again the same, though this time SvD had entitled its article “Swede reported EU-torture”. Mostly the media was unequivocal in their reporting that it was French troops who had performed the torture. Additionally Aftonbladet posted an editorial where they stated that “the violations must result in foreign political consequences[...] The Swedish soldiers have much to be proud about. Some even had the courage to talk about the French activities” (Aftonbladet 26 March 2008).

The same day as SVT aired its programme, the Swedish Armed Forces also posted online its version of the story. Repeating much of what already had been said in their previous statement online and to the media, it also included some additional information about the investigation process. Chief legal advisor Stefan Ryding-Berg was also quoted stating that the “[i]nvestigation show[ed] that the Swedish commanding officer correctly reported to his superior within EUFOR. On the other hand he should also have reported the incident home to the Headquarters in Stockholm. Since that did not happen the incident was not given adequate attention within Headquarters, and the

heads of the mission therefore did not take any measures” (Swedish Armed Forces 25 March 2008). The story further stated that “Summer 2007 the Armed Forces informed the nation in question [sic] about the investigation that had begun in Sweden. ‘We were told that they had not found anything that could confirm the information that had appeared in the report we had received,’ says Stefan Ryding-Berg” (ibid.).

After the initial news reactions to the story, it was busily discussed in blogs, though it neither filled newspaper columns, nor did any politicians get involved. The Armed Forces posted another article online on 27 March in which they stated that they would “draw lessons from the incidents during Operation Artemis. ‘We will introduce clearer routines. As soon as there are any indications of irregularities, then a report shall be written and sent home to Headquarters,’ says Chief legal advisor Stefan Ryding-Berg” (Swedish Armed Forces 27 March 2008). The article also read that Ryding-Berg put principle criticism on the Swedish commanding officer in field for not reporting home. It also stated:

Personnel in international service may be subjected to unpleasant impressions and experiences, which sometimes it may take years to handle[...]

That unconfirmed information about irregularities in connection with operations abroad circulate is however not uncommon, according to Stefan Ryding-Berg.

‘During every operation of this kind there are always rumours and stories. We cannot assume that they have any substance before they have been made more concrete.’ (ibid.)

Ryding-Berg admitted however that the Swedish Armed Forces should have initiated the investigation earlier than they eventually did.

The next few days, only minor follow-up news stories were written about the torture-case. 4 April a DN columnist Henrik Berggren wrote an editorial piece in which he questioned the morale preparedness in the Swedish Armed Forces;

One can naturally have wished that some Swede had directly confronted the French and demanded an end to the torture. But all social-psychological studies show that this is only exceptional behaviour. The combination of military discipline and the necessary loyalty that is created between soldiers in war situations hamper the individual moral impulse.

It is therefore important that the humanitarian and international legal principles are found in the backbone of those ultimately responsible[...]

The continued story is not any more constructive [than what has previously happened]. The troops arrive home, several of the Swedish soldiers are not doing well and rumours of what happened in Chem-Chem have started to reach the Defence Forces' leadership. To claim, as 'Uppdrag Granskning', that one has 'covered up the issue' seems very tough[...]

If Sweden is to participate with military forces in our new, but not always fair, world, we as citizens, parents and soldiers need to know that our leaders are of the right sort. (DN 4 April 2008)

Also on 4 April, the Armed Forces released three news articles. The first, posted in the morning online, was entitled "Difficult operation in the Congo";

Swedish soldiers in the Special Protection Group and the Paratrooper School completed a fine mission with a good result. So says Rear Admiral Jörgen Ericsson, chief of the Armed Forces special unit about Operation Artemis in the Congo in 2003[...]

'During Operation Artemis an incident occurred that the Armed Forces have investigated. No Swedish soldiers participated in the incident, be it from the SSG or the Parachute Rangers (FJS). When the Swedish commanding officer, colonel Hans Alm, was made aware of the incident, by Swedish soldiers, he reported it to the French commanding officer after which the activities ended quickly.'

Hans Alm acted correctly, says Jörgen Ericsson[...]

‘The incident shall not in any way darken or overshadow the mission that the SSG and FJS completed in connection with Operation Artemis. It was a good result under difficult circumstances.’

[Alm] did not report home about what was conceived as torture-like methods and a violation of international law. That is the only point for which the Armed Forces can direct any criticism against Hans Alm.

‘I have great confidence in Hans Alm. Colonel Alm is a very competent officer who led the Swedish troop in the operation under difficult circumstances. Admittedly Colonel Alm failed in reporting home, but he took the necessary measures in field,’ says Jörgen Ericsson. (Swedish Armed Forces 4 April 2008)

Later the same day, 4 April, the Armed Forces reported that Rear Admiral Jörgen Ericsson had repeatedly asked for a report of the suspected breach of international law during Operation Artemis since assuming his position as chief of the SSG in Autumn 2005 (Swedish Armed Forces 4 April 2008). Additionally the Armed Forces reported that the qualified secrecy around the conclusions and recommendations from the investigation of Operation Artemis had been lifted. The cited document concluded, as had been stated earlier, that “nothing indicate[d] that Swedish citizens ha[d] made themselves guilty of these excesses [sic], rather there it was someone from the French force that ha[d] completed this” (ibid.).

At the same time the media increased its focus on the Supreme Commander Håkan Syrén. SVT ran regular updates of the story. On 2 April a long, updated news article was published, entitled “Supreme Commander kept Congo-torture secret”. The article was complete with menacing-looking photos of Colonel Alm as well as French commanding officer Christophe Rastouil, both of which were stated to have been given decorations for their work upon return. (SVT 2 April 2008). The next day, SVT reported that “Congo-documents may be stolen” (SVT 3 April 2008). The Armed Forces’ investigator Stefan Ryding-Berg had not found any photos of the torture, but according

to an officer a safety locker in a camp in Sweden had been forcefully opened. The locker had, according to Ryding-Berg, contained documents from the Congo (ibid.)

Also on 3 April, SVT aired an interview with Supreme Commander Håkan Syrén in which he was stated to condemn what had happened in the Congo and said that international law is always applicable. “With the Armed Forces’ fundamental values it is evident where we stand on these issues” (SVT 3 April 2008). The next day, the Defence committee was reported to have called in the Supreme Commander for a hearing on 6 May. The Social Democrat spokesperson for foreign affairs, Urban Ahlin, was cited saying that “We want a presentation that shows the truth... We do not send soldiers out to watch [torture]. They are to fight for democracy. All forms of torture are unacceptable” (SVT 4 April 2008). Minutes from the committee meeting, actually held on 22 April, show that Supreme Commander Syrén was present and criticised for not sharing information with the politicians (SVT 22 April 2008).

The French commanding officer during Operation Artemis, Christophe Rastouil, wrote a letter detailing his version of the story. His letter was published on 9 April by SVT. He wrote that

[d]uring the whole time as commanding officer of the Franco-Swedish special units under ARTEMIS [sic] I have not had any knowledge of torture or mock execution performed by French or Swedish troops under my command. I am convinced that such actions have never happened. This investigation will confirm that this is objective and unquestionable. If it had come to my knowledge that the alleged violations had happened, I would have immediately intervened to stop such unacceptable methods. Finally I am personally accused as having performed the mock execution of the young Congolese. I assert that this accusation is a lie and that the allegations that have been made public are untrue and I consider them to be dishonouring. I am deeply hurt and shook and will therefore when the investigation is finished take adequate measures.

Colonel Christophe Rastouil (SVT 9 April 2008).

The same day as Colonel Rastouil's letter was published, the Swedish Armed Forces called in for a press conference during which Supreme Commander Syrén stated that a new investigation was being initiated that would research leadership and unit culture in the wake of the Congo-debate. Syrén stated that he "wish[ed] to emphasise that the Swedish unit ha[d] not violated international law during Operation Artemis in the Congo. [He would not] lead an enterprise built on rumours" (DN 9 April 2008). Furthermore, the article read:

Personally the Supreme Commander did not believe that Swedish soldiers could have made themselves guilty of any such torture-like interrogation methods as the French forces now are being accused of, inter alia mock executions and electrical torture.

'In our training we emphasise our Swedish fundamental values, code of conduct, rules for how Swedish troops act abroad as well as the general rules of international law. (ibid.)

In the Swedish Parliament, some action was also being taken. Left MP Wahlén filed an interpellation (question) to the Minister of Defence Tolgfors, where she wrote that

Swedish participation in international military missions has inter alia as aim to protect and increase the security for populations against inter alia attacks from combating parties. I see it as very serious that Swedish soldiers have witnessed or participated in a troop where violations, torture and other inhumane methods occur. It is also very serious that when soldiers correctly reported the incidents to their superiors this was ignored and no measures were taken. It is an insult to the soldiers and to our whole Swedish contingent.

One can even ask whether similar violations happen in UN, NATO and EU-forces where no Swedish soldiers participate. It is of course completely unacceptable that violations and torture occur. Sweden must have guarantees that

[such things] do not happen in any of our missions, be they led by the UN, NATO or EU[...]

Which measures does the Minister of Defence intend to take in order to guarantee that similar situations absolutely will not happen again? (Swedish Parliament 9 April 2008)

The reply came on 25 April. Minister Tolgfors stated *inter alia*

Sweden shall have a leading position when it comes to questions of values... This has even got an important operative meaning. A good relationship to the civilian population prevents the escalation of conflicts and gives us better preconditions for completing the mission. It also adds to our safety[...]

The Armed Forces have a clear responsibility to prepare personnel before missions and offer the support needed by the personnel during the mission. In this includes not least the training needed for personnel to act in the right way even in such situations that may be experienced as difficult by the individual[...]

The individual soldier who participates in international missions shall not have to feel himself or his work questioned, but rather shall with the help of routines and rules have full support to act. (Swedish Parliament 25 April 2008)

The Left MP who first filed the interpellation to the Minister of Defence, and who was the only MP to get involved in the issue hearing, made some follow-up questions and remarks:

I mainly see four areas which have to be reviewed within the Swedish international troops[...]

The second area is the macho-culture and the glorification of violence that still seems to prevail among our troops –our most well-educated, well-trained and experienced soldiers. I consider it to be serious problem of leadership when the

highest chief in field for Sweden's part allows himself to be photographed posing with his weapon in front of a burning village in the Congo[...]

The third area is racism. I consider that there are problems with Sweden participating in military operations with countries that are former colonial masters. Several countries in Europe have continued great political interests in the old African colonies. There is even a widespread racist tradition in several countries vis-à-vis Africa. In Uppdrag granskning a Swedish soldier witnesses about an incident when a French soldier allegedly commented the parading with a noose around the neck saying that it was 'an old tradition that the Belgians used to employ during the last century in order to suppress the negroes in the Congo'. Such things shall absolutely not happen in any country. (ibid.)

Minister Tolgfors' final reply included the following passages:

Mr chairman! I believe that at this end of the debate there is time to consider the Swedish soldier. We can ascertain that it should not be so that the current debate about rules, conditions and other countries' acts is perceived as criticism against the individual Swedish soldier.

They make up an incredibly important contribution in international missions to spread peace and security in the world. They are not criminals. They are heroes. They are doing an enormous self-sacrificing work[...]

The general picture is that what we are doing is incredibly appreciated, filled with quality and characterised by the fundamental values that we stand for. (ibid.)

The media coverage of the story had branched out into different strands; on 12 April a doctor of law and former diplomat argued in an op.ed. in SvD for the need for more legal advisors in military units abroad (SvD 12 April 2008). A few days later one of the newspaper's columnists wrote a more philosophical article on the dilemma of double loyalties, based on the Congo-story (SvD 17 April 2008). A similar column was even written in DN the same day (DN 17 April 2008). The following day, another expert on



international law was quoted in a news article saying that it was “a little naïve and typically Swedish to throw ourselves head first into cooperation with countries with a colonial tradition” (SvD 18 April 2008).

On the other hand, much media focus was on colonel Hans Alm. The media had reported earlier on that Alm was working as head of the Swedish contingent in Chad, which was being implemented at the same time. While the Armed Forces rejected this information, they simultaneously called Alm back from his current mission “in Africa, in Chad where Swedes even this time are under French command” (DN 11 April 2008). He broke the silence himself on 19 April, in the much listened to Saturday interview in the public service SR. During the ten-minute interview Colonel Alm was repeatedly asked about details around the incident in the Congo. He admitted to parts of the criticism, though asserted that he had not been told of any ongoing torture, and furthermore denied that any mock execution had happened. He also pointed to the fact that the Swedish Armed Forces’ investigation report included interviews with Swedish soldiers only, whereas the then-forthcoming French report would include both French *and* Swedish accounts. Another part of the interview went as follows:

[Journalist:] Now as mentioned it was French personnel who stand accused and in the Armed Forces’ investigation one speaks a lot about cultural differences between French and Swedish units. In what way, do you think, it is noticeable? Are these cultural differences noticeable in these kinds of situations?

[Hans Alm:] Yes, naturally there are cultural differences between all countries, one knows that in these international missions...

[Journalist:] Yes, I mean just specifically when it comes to this type of difficult situations.

[Hans Alm:] No, I’m not sure if there are any cultural differences in this. There are... what I could note in this, precisely as in many other situations, is that obviously it varies which approach one has to different things when one comes from different countries with different experiences, but primarily these are actually

individuals we talk about, how one for example interact with the local population and such. I wouldn't say that is any kind of cultural difference, rather it is...

[Journalist:] But wasn't there talk ahead of the operation about how it would be a problem that France is a former colonial power and such, that they therefore have a different way of interacting with the local population. How do you see it?

[Hans Alm:] Yes, it might be a problem, but in this case I would argue that it was a rather great asset for us who were in Africa for the first time, to initially be able to do mixed patrols with the French, and we had quite a few ideas on how we should operate as one operated in Europe, for example by working in smaller units and so on, that we quickly learnt was dangerous as it invites someone [else] to believe they have a chance and therefore can also provoke violence. (SR 19 April 2008)

The French (bad) influence on the Swedes' behaviour was highlighted again a few days later, in a news article in the tabloid Expressen which reported that the Swedes were allegedly being trained in racism; "The French leadership is claimed to have 'taught' the Swedes in how the 'negroes' should be dealt with" (Expressen 23 April 2008). Around the same time as the last news article, the French report mentioned by Colonel Alm had been released. According to this report, no torture had happened; "[t]he grave accusations that have been directed against the French and Swedish soldiers in general, and in particular against commanding officer Christophe Rastouil and the Swedish commanding officer Hans Alm, are unfounded" (SVT 25 April 2008). The officer who allegedly reported the torture in 2007, however, stated that he had been forced into silence. Furthermore, he claimed that there had been rivalries and cooperation problems between the two groups that made up the Swedish contingent in the DRC; namely the FJS and SSG (SVT 28 April 2008; SvD 28 April 2008).

The last notable turn of the story occurred on 7 May when SvD published an op.ed. signed anonymously by a group of nine representatives from the SSG and the Special Reconnaissance Group (SIG), five of which served in Operation Artemis. According to them, the *Uppdrag granskning* report gave a misleading picture of what

had happened in the DRC: although relatively harsh interrogation methods had been applied, which were purportedly stopped at the demand of Colonel Alm, neither mock execution nor parading by noose had happened. They further asserted that another officer, with the same rank as Alm, had been present at the evening of the incident, but that SVT had not put any of the blame on him. Also one could read the following:

Why then has this particular incident been raised now, almost five years later? We believe above all that an individual felt bypassed, did not consider himself to have received enough recognition for his work and furthermore disliked the decision about the special unit's development[...]

This individual has together with a small number of like-minded persons in the presence of witnesses expressed several times that they would 'sink' Hans Alm, who is considered guilty of several misdeeds. (SvD 7 May 2008)

The next day, three reporters from *Uppdrag granskning* wrote a reply in which they stated that EUFOR and the UN should force the nine anonymous representatives to witness under oath. They added that they through their work had seen several cases of professional secrecy being used as a smoke screen by those who did not wish to answer questions about what had really happened (SvD 8 May 2008).

27 June TT reported that Colonel Hans Alm as well as Rear Admiral Jörgen Ericsson were reinstated as chiefs of the Armed Forces special unit. On the Armed Forces' investigation report, the news article read that

[t]he matter was investigated by chief legal advisor Stefan Ryding-Berg, who wrote in his report last year that 'there had been torture in connection with the interrogation'. But in the aftermath came new revelations of rivalry and defamation between the two special units as well as the revelation of other scandals such as a visit to prostitutes in Gabon, racism and a tradition of inappropriate schnapps songs. Lindström who is head of the international force was given by the Supreme Commander the task of investigating it all.

The investigation resulted in no consequences for those involved. (DN 27 June 2008)

Summarised, the Congo case showed two parallel reactions: firstly, the media and politicians were quick to put blame on an individual Swedish officer while simultaneously highlighting the good behaviour of the rest of the Swedish troops. The Armed Forces showed much of the same reaction, but with less direct criticism against any single person. Secondly, the media, politicians and other opinion-makers expressed several times generalised, negative views of the French forces' values and behaviour, whereas the Armed Forces did not. This will be investigated further in the analysis in chapter 5.2 and 5.3.

## **4.2 Colonial collaborators?**

Shortly after Operation Artemis, Grignon at the International Crisis Group critically labelled it “a French operation with an EU cover” (Grignon 2003). However, Ulriksen, Gourlay & Mace claim that Grignon’s description is “based on the misunderstanding that France ‘was the only country to have men on the ground’. As the framework nation, it is true that the French dominated the operation. But does not the fact that Sweden deployed 80 of its best troops and let them engage in combat alongside the French make a difference? This non-aligned, thoroughly Social Democratic champion of peacekeeping and development aid does not seem a likely ally for ‘traditional French interventionism’ in Africa” (Ulriksen, Gourlay & Mace 2004: 520-521).

Whereas few raised the spectre of colonial collaboration in connection with Operation Artemis, it was much more pronounced in the case of EUFOR Tchad/RCA. The problem of French colonial history in Chad and the subsequent question of the neutrality of the mission (vis-à-vis parties to the internal conflicts in Chad) were well known before its implementation. Discussions surrounding a potential EU force to Chad had been held in the EU during the summer of 2007, and reportedly the EU ministers decided on 23 July to prepare for a mission (BBC 23 July 2007). Sweden was allegedly

one of the drivers behind the plan (Aftonbladet 23 July 2007). Exactly one month later, on 23 August, Aftonbladet's EU blogger reported that there seemed to be quite some insecurity surrounding the potential Swedish contingent (Aftonbladet 23 August 2007). Minister of Foreign Affairs, Carl Bildt, had written in his personal blog (an oft-cited source of information about Swedish foreign policy) that he had noted "several question marks in the margins" of his copy of the Chad report (Bildt 21 August 2007). Furthermore, Aftonbladet's EU blogger pointed to the fact that the operation was driven by "the old colonial power France" (Aftonbladet 23 July 2007).

Planning continued however. On 25 September the UN Security Council authorised a multinational presence in Chad and the CAR. At the same time the Swedish Ministry of Defence instructed the Armed Forces to plan and prepare for a potential mission, where the first amphibious force, IAS, was to form the basis of the Swedish contingent (Swedish Armed Forces 2010). The following day DN wrote that the newspaper had several sources stating that France had tried to persuade Sweden to take the role of chief commander of the mission. Minister of Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt was quoted saying that the aim was to avoid the operation from becoming too French (DN 26 September 2007). Half of the operation's troops were to be French, and the article read that France was having difficulty gathering enough contributions from other countries. Two days later, Aftonbladet's EU-blogger quoted a BBC interview with the humanitarian organisation Oxfam, which stated that "[i]f the major component of the forces is French it will not be seen as a neutral force in the country by a lot of other stakeholders" (Aftonbladet 27 September 2007). The blogger rhetorically raised the questions of how that image could be changed, what the EU forces' rules of engagement were to say about the internal conflicts of Chad and the CAR (ibid.).

The issue of Swedish participation in EUFOR Tchad/RCA was finally raised in Parliament by the Government on 18 October through a proposition bill, debated in committee and finally in plenary 21 November 2007. While the issue of impartiality or neutrality was not raised in the Government's proposition, two of the opposition parties,

the Left Party and the Green Party, filed motions to the Parliament in which they separately mentioned it. According to the Left Party,

[t]hat the EU-led force, which Sweden participates in, is impartial with regards to the country's internal conflicts is another demand from the Left Party. That the force will be led by France is therefore problematic since both Chad and the CAR are former colonies of that country[...] This makes France both historically and currently a part of the ongoing conflict. It is therefore of utmost importance that the EU-led force is lead in such a way that it is not perceived as belonging to any side of the ongoing battles. Sweden must defend the integrity of the mission so that it under no circumstances becomes a piece in the political game. (Swedish Parliament 2007/08:U3).

In the Green Party's motion, one subtitle read "The importance of being a neutral part";

Sweden must under no circumstances become a part of a European neo-colonial expedition corps in order to secure natural resources to multinational enterprises[...]

France has as the former colonial power a long history in the region. The former European colonial power has at several times acted as support to the current regime in Chad[...]

There is also a great risk that the EU-force that the Swedish contingent is going to participate in, of which one half will be made up of French troops, can have its neutrality questioned because of France' history as colonial power in the region. It is therefore of extra importance to bring peace and stability to the area that we are and are perceived as neutral actors who are preoccupied by the local population's well-being and inspire confidence from all involved parties. (Swedish Parliament 2007/08:U5)

The third, and by far largest opposition party, the Social Democrats, also presented a motion, but which did not mention the issue of French colonial past or neutrality:

The EU-mission is a support to the UN's crisis management capacity and rests on a clear legal mandate. We wish to underline that it is the UN that has requested this EU-mission, and we welcome that EU in this way shows its support to the UN's work for crisis- and conflict management. We the Social Democrats consider that a Swedish participation in an EU-force requested by the UN with the aim to support the security and protection of civilians as well as the UN personnel is proof of Sweden's strong support of the UN and the multilateral system.

[...]To strengthen the EU's crisis- and conflict management capacity even outside the borders of the EU, as well as placing it at the disposal of the UN, is a development that we the Social Democrats have actively driven. (Swedish Parliament 2007/08:U4)

The ensuing committee recommendations to the plenary decision, which is made by simple majority, rejected the demands that the Parliament should notify the Government of its view on the above-mentioned dilemmas. The committee stated that

[w]ith regards to the demand that the Swedish contingent's neutrality must be protected, the committee notes that the multidimensional missions inter alia consists of units from a number of countries – at least Belgium, Ireland, France, Poland, Romania, Sweden and Austria – which offer varying forms of contributions. The mission as a whole is under the command of an Irish general. (Swedish Parliament 2007/08:UFöU2)

The above-cited motions were thereafter echoed again in the succeeding Parliamentary debate. Eventually all parties voted in approval of the operation.

The Swedish contingent was deployed to Chad in February. The most debated controversy surrounding the operation in a Swedish context was the relatively short

time period during which the Swedish troops would stay in Chad. The crux of the issue was the fact that Swedish contingent was initially mandated for a four month period, which in reality would mean that they would be in full operating strength during only four to six weeks. Inter alia, DN published an editorial which stated that the decision “fitted poorly into the Swedish security policy and its fundamental theme of international cooperation” (DN 21 February 2008). The initial contingent was set to cost 380 million Swedish kronor, and an extension was at first deemed outside of budget. The Government was criticised for the poor use of the money, and for harming Swedish recognition abroad (DN 16 February 2008). The Government eventually changed its mind and decided to extend the operation to 30 November 2008 at the latest. The new proposition had been forwarded to Parliament on 15 May, handled in committee shortly after and then debated in plenary on 17 June. Again, the proposition was supported by all parties. During the debate, an MP from the Centre Party stated:

Last Autumn the Social Democrats were hesitant to whether the risks of the task were too great and whether the French history in Chad would possibly make it more difficult for the Swedish contingent and for EUFOR’s participation. Yet it has worked well, and it is good that we are now fully in agreement that the Swedish soldiers are making an important contribution for security in the area, for the local population and for the many refugees. (Swedish Parliament 17 June 2008)

The Social Democrat spokesperson for foreign affairs responded that

[w]hat we expressed hesitance towards was precisely that it was France that was lead nation [sic]. There were discussions in French media that Sweden would be lead nation [sic][...] We expressed no hesitance whatsoever to the contribution being necessary and to it being positive that Sweden participated there. At the same time France is a former colonial power in Chad, and we have highlighted that it is important that the EUFOR-force shows neutrality in field so that we don’t draw increased risk to our Swedish troops. (ibid.)



The issues of neutrality and the French colonial past in Chad never reached the same scale of debate as the limited time frame of the Swedish contribution. However, the issues followed the mission from the very start. Several news stories referred to them, albeit the majority, in particular the more descriptive ones on events in Chad, did not. The official stated aim of the operation; to protect refugees and humanitarian organisations; were reiterated several times. However, reporters lifted the question of neutrality and the French colonial past well prior to the Parliament's decision to mandate Swedish participation in EUFOR Tchad/RCA. Two days ahead of the plenary debate, TT's Brussels correspondent reported that "[t]he French' participation has been questioned by external critics since France has a colonial past in the region and already has military forces there that have made enemies among the parties in the region. These question whether France is a neutral player in the context" (SvD 19 November 2007). The same reporter was again quoted a week after the Parliament mandated Swedish participation, in an article entitled "Difficult to fill EU's Chad force". He claimed that

[t]he fact that it is France that has driven the operation, and which stands for the largest troop contribution, has led to debates. In Austria, a country which will send forces, an internal military PM has raised questions of France' intentions behind the operation. Previous French support for Chad's president in the conflict in Chad may force EUFOR to choose side and be exposed to danger, according to the report which is quoted by the Austrian news agency APA. (SvD 28 November 2007)

The problem of getting enough countries to pitch in to the mission continued. On 10 January 2008, it was reported that EUFOR Tchad/RCA would be led by an Irish general, but that France had been pushing other EU member states to participate as well. Furthermore, "[d]espite French – and Swedish – appeals, collecting enough soldiers ha[d] gone very slowly" (SvD 10 January 2008). On 25 January, the Swedish Parliament's EU commission had invited State Secretary Håkan Jonsson and Cabinet Secretary Frank Belfrage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to report from the last EU

minister meeting and to be prepared ahead of the next. Among other questions, the Social Democrat spokesperson for foreign affairs made the following intervention:

What Mary Robinson [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights] mentioned in the article [from the International Herald Tribune, circulated in the committee during the meeting][...] is that it is incredibly important that the force is ‘strictly neutral and impartial in Chad’ [sic]. We travel with a very large contingent from France, and as I perceive it France isn’t perceived as the most neutral part in Chad with its old colonial history and additionally the unhappy story of the kidnapped children.

I was slightly worried when I received the article. I read it contrary to how Belfrage says I should read it. I felt that the Government is now trying to pull back here and feels it is getting a bit difficult. The same is felt a little further below. What are the terms? What are the rules for the force’ engagement in Chad?

But let me still say that we from the Social Democrats support the mission in Chad. (Swedish Parliament 25 January 2007)

To which Cabinet Secretary Belfrage responded:

[...]Neutrality and impartiality are very important, and it is something that Sweden has actively pushed and even had included explicitly in the operation plans for the Chad operation. We have seen precisely the same risk in the too-close identification and collaboration with France, and it is very important that the UN and the EU act impartially and neutral. Therefore we have, so to speak, had this written in fire in group’s operation plan. (ibid.)

Swedish media coverage from conflict in Chad increased ahead of the deployment. On 7 February, Swedish media reported a story from TT and AFP, in which the Chadian president Idriss Déby had criticised the African Union for “sticking its head in the sand” by giving Sudan “a sort of green light to destabilise Chad”;

He encouraged the EU to as soon as possible send the promised peace force which is going to be stationed in eastern Chad and the north-eastern CAR and in which Sweden will participate with 200 infantry soldiers.

At the same time he thanked the former colonial power France which according to the president helped with important intelligence activity.

The rebels are all the more critical to France' role in the conflict and state that the country 'carries a heavy responsibility for having placed itself on the side of the dictatorial, oppressing, corrupt, mob-like and illegal regime and for manipulating the UN Security Council to legitimise an armed intervention (DN 7 February 2008)

The news article contained no other reference to Sweden than the one stated. A few days later, on 13 February, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bernard Kouchner, had stated to AFP that a unit of Swedish Special Forces had already landed in Chad. The Swedish Armed Forces, however, refused to comment the statement (DN 13 February 2008). Only a couple of weeks later could Expressen publish an article stating that "[h]ere are the first photos of the Swedish soldiers who are fighting for peace in Chad. Their task is to protect the refugees from violence" (Expressen 27 February 2008). In the following period, both the Swedish media and Armed Forces published photos and videos from the Swedish soldiers in field (see SvD 27 February 2008; Aftonbladet 20 April 2008; Swedish Armed Forces 3 March 2008; Swedish Armed Forces 10 March 2008; Swedish Armed Forces 6 April 2008; Swedish Armed Forces 23 May 2008; Swedish Armed Forces 28 May 2008). The latter released professional, high-quality videos showing inter alia interviews with Swedish soldiers (both women and men), their interaction with the local population (in particular the children), as well as their patrols by dromedary.

Around the same time as deployment in February, discussions in Sweden revolved mostly around whether or not the Swedish contribution could be extended. More of an exception was Left MP Hans Linde's written question to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 20 February, which after a description of the internal conflict in

Chad asked the following: “Which initiatives does the Minister consider taking in order to put pressure on the Déby-regime so that the security of the civilian opposition leaders can be guaranteed and in order to secure the EUFOR force’ neutrality so that the force will not become a part of the internal conflict in Chad?” (Swedish Parliament 20 February 2008). Minister of Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt replied a week later that Sweden and several other countries had “driven and received recognition for this principle [impartiality] during the preparations to the EU mission. This [was] reflected in clear writing in all of the EU’s political and military planning documents, that EUFOR Tchad/RCA sh[ould] be neutral, impartial and independent” (Swedish Parliament 27 February 2008). While the opposition had been the most vocal in raising the issue of impartiality, it was the Minister of Defence and an MP from his government coalition partner, the Centre Party, who raised it during plenary a debate on 5 March about the possible extension of the Swedish contingent (Swedish Parliament 5 March 2008).

Apart from the extension debate, media coverage tended to be either copies or rewrites of shorter, descriptive reports from news agencies, or longer articles done by Swedish correspondents. Aftonbladet’s blogger travelled down to Chad in March 2008. Inter alia, she wrote an article entitled “Here Swedish soldiers are creating peace”, their task described as “protecting refugees in what is called the world’s greatest humanitarian catastrophe” (Aftonbladet 20 March 2008). The article went on to describing the situation for the Swedish troops, while the larger context was not included. In a blog post from the same day, one can read that “[a]fter all political mess and diplomatic complications the surrounding world has intervened – and it is the Swedish company that is the spearhead” (ibid.). The last news article printed in Aftonbladet from the trip came 1 April. However, the printed and online article differed from the correspondent’s original version, which she posted on her blog. Inter alia the following had been cut out:

Sure, there are many reasons why he [a Swedish soldier] is there; Europe wants to show its presence in Africa where China already has a strong position[...]

Sure, Sweden sends a force because it wants to earn points within the EU, the closure-threatened amphibian regiment wants to show what they can do both within the Armed Forces and the EUFOR-force.

But in the middle of this game there is also an honest will to do good and to help, such as Erik Carlson [a soldier] is doing something instead of nothing. And that is good enough. (Aftonbladet 1 April 2008)

Correspondents both from SVT and DN reported from Chad in May. SVT focussed on the action and incidents in the border area (SVT 16 May 2008), whereas DN published an article the very same day which told of the tediousness experienced by the Swedish soldiers in field. The latter article was entitled “Ungrateful task for the Chad force” and claimed that neither the local population nor the humanitarian organisations had welcomed the Swedish soldiers. The latter did not wish to receive any escort from the military for fear of being too closely associated with the forces. A local villager had stated that the military, regardless of background, created a sense of fear in the area. Furthermore, the correspondent wrote that

[t]he greatest question surrounding the EUFOR-force is however the relationship to the French military force which has been present in Chad since independence from France 1960, and which has on several occasions helped president Déby to defend himself against rebel attacks. It was the French who took initiative to the EUFOR-force, and many have asked if it is not so that France actually wants her European colleagues in place to offer legitimacy to an increasingly questioned cooperation between Chad and France.

Despite explicit neutrality there is also the question whether or not the EUFOR-force, like the French mission Epervier, can be seen as at least indirect support to Idriss Déby’s government, a fundamentally undemocratic regime.

‘They are two completely separate operations,’ assures Peder Ohlsson [head of the Swedish contingent]. ‘I’m very clear about that, towards the unit but also

outwards, because they have a different agenda, anyone can see that. And there we are completely on the side. (DN 16 May 2008)

A month later, SVT reported that Chadian president Idriss Déby “accuse[d] the French-led EUFOR-force in the country of supporting the rebels in the country’s eastern parts” (SVT 16 June 2008). A few days before, on 9 June, Aftonbladet reported that the Swedish force had been in a “party scandal”. The allegedly scandalous event was the celebration of Midsummer’s Eve, during which soldiers had been allowed a double beer ration, from two to four beers (the two extra could be exchanged for a glass of wine or a small shot of schnapps) (Expressen 9 June 2008). During the rest of the summer, media coverage of the situation in Chad and the Swedish contingent decreased.

On 8 October, SvD’s Africa correspondent reported from the Swedish troops preparation for departure from Chad. Some of the contents of that article have been referred to in the previous chapter. While the article summarised the debates that had surrounded the extension of the contingent, the issue of neutrality and impartiality as well as the larger international political context was left out (SvD 8 October 2008).

In brief, the issue of impartiality or neutrality (both terms were used interchangeably) was raised by the media as well as by politicians, in particular the opposition. However, it never seemed to have any policy implications and was never subject to a more thorough debate. Sweden’s foreign policy identity as impartial and internationalist was highlighted, in implicit and explicit opposition to the former colonial powers that participated in Eufor Tchad/RCA. While the Armed Forces did not participate actively in any debate concerning the impartiality of the operation, they were nonetheless engaged in presenting it as a humanitarian effort. This will be discussed further and analysed in the next chapter.

## 5 Analysis

In chapter 2 a theoretical framework was outlined for this paper. It is now time to recall parts of that framework. After firstly reintroducing the theoretical model of cognitive dissonance, I will secondly compare the findings from chapter 4 with chapter 3 in order to look at how different actors handled cases of dissonance. Thirdly, after looking at how well the reactions seen fit with the theory of cognitive dissonance, I will consider alternative theoretical models.

### 5.1 *Theoretical insights*

As stated earlier, the theory of cognitive dissonance stipulates that the existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance (Festinger 1957: 3). In this paper, I have been looking at what discourses surround Swedish participation in Operation Artemis and EUFOR Tchad/RCA, and how these discourses have been challenged by actions that do not line up with those discourses. I have hypothesised that either

1. The violation of the norm will be externalised *or*
2. The violation of the norm will be dismissed.

The answer to these two questions is, for the most, affirmative. In the case of Operation Artemis, the blame for the normative violation was principally put on an individual officer, and thereby not extended to the other Swedish soldiers in general. Furthermore, in both Operation Artemis and Eufor Tchad/RCA, blame was directed against the French colleagues who also participated. In the latter case, claims of normative violations were largely dismissed by the involved parties, and by the media only discussed in passing. However, not all reactions matched the hypotheses above, e.g. some politicians did try to debate the normative challenges more openly. To explain these diverging reactions, let us look more closely at the findings in chapters 3 and 4.

## **5.2 Cases of dissonance and reactions**

Chapter 3 attempted to establish the dominant discourses surrounding Swedish participation in peace operations, looking at the two cases Operation Artemis and EUFOR Tchad/RCA. The overarching norms of military non-alignment, internationalism and europeanisation were all present in the discourses surrounding the operations in the DRC and Chad. Sweden's long history as a peacekeeper as well as lack of colonial history were highlighted. Both cases also lend themselves to internationalism and europeanisation, as they were situated in Africa to which Sweden has had a long-standing commitment to development, and under EU command. On the individual level, the image of the Swedish soldier was that of a humanitarian professional, influenced by Swedish norms which in turn were permeated through the educational and military systems. Conversely, soldiers from other countries were not assumed to have the same, positive characteristics.

The torture-case in the DRC and the possible neo-colonial collaboration in the Chad presented ample possibilities for dissonance, although in slightly different ways. The torture during Operation Artemis clearly dissonated with Sweden's internationalist motives behind the mission. As for EUFOR Tchad/RCA, both the norms of impartiality and internationalism were challenged, as Sweden was participating alongside the former colonial power France, which in turn was claimed to have mixed motives. On the level of the individual soldier, we can see much of the same challenges. Operation Artemis, where the (in)actions of Swedish troops came to the forefront, challenged the notion of Swedish soldiers as open-minded, professional and internationalist. In EUFOR Tchad/RCA, the professionalism and impartiality of the Swedish troops was also challenged, albeit less directly and acutely than in the DRC.

### **5.2.1 Swedish Self-Image I: Country-level**

With regards to the Swedish self-image at country-level, EUFOR Tchad/RCA posed an obvious challenge on all relevant aspects. Voices were raised questioning whether the operation in fact was a way for France to intervene in one of its former colonies, and



that Sweden was naïvely getting involved. Indeed, several commentators argued that France was trying to gain legitimacy for its African policy by europeanising it and thereby being able to render accusations of neo-colonialism groundless (Bagoyoko & Gibert 2007: 21-22; Grignon 2003). Obviously this could challenge the Swedish foreign policy identity as internationalist and non-aligned (neutral, non-colonial).

The Swedish Government initially did not pay much attention to the potentially questionable cooperation with a former colonial power; it was not mentioned in the proposition recommending participation in the operation. Rather, it referred to internationalist concerns, such as helping refugees and supporting the UN. Whereas the media had raised the concern it had not made it into a large issue of discussion; it did not fill any editorial columns, and the media did not confront any decision-makers with the problem. According to Olof Santesson, “the mass media have not questioned the row of Swedish individual contributions in Africa including what the amphibian corps accomplished in Chad during 2008. One can perhaps wonder why the media interest in these cases have not been larger – such contradicts the image of a more critical tendency within our media and a will to seek the truth” (Santesson 2009: 313). No opinion-maker used the media as a channel through which to start a debate surrounding Sweden’s potential collaboration with the French. The media did however on at least one occasion raise the issue with a representative of the military, cited earlier, to which the officer replied that EUFOR Tchad/RCA was clearly demarcated from the French military presence, Operation Épervier, already in place, and that the former was neutral.

The first politicians to express concern was the opposition in Parliament, firstly by the radical Green and Left parties, and then more hesitantly by the Social Democrats. However, despite being raised a number of times, even here the issue never really took on any magnitude. The non-socialist majority in Parliament dismissed the issue by simply pointing to the fact that there were several other countries involved as well besides France. The Government did at a couple of instances admit the risks of being seen as collaborating with France, but stated that Sweden had worked actively to include neutrality explicitly in the operation plan. This also rhymes well with the theory

that Sweden as well as Finland has been among the drivers behind the development of the ESDP in order to adapt it to its own likings. The fact that neutrality was included in the operation plan seemed to be sufficient to reassure the Government as well as the opposition that Sweden was acting correctly in participating in EUFOR Tchad/RCA. In other words, the decision-makers as well as the media seemed content that even this mission was conducted in accordance with Swedish norms of internationalism and neutrality. The issue lingered for a while, but was dismissed whenever it was raised. All parties voted in favour of the operation and the Social Democrats even expressed that their hesitance never revolved around Swedish participation as such. This was also symptomatic of the findings in general relating to Sweden's state-level self-image: in accordance with my hypothesis, challenges were largely dismissed.

### **5.2.2 Swedish Self-Image II: Swedish troops**

Next let us look at the level of the individual soldier. The torture incident during Operation Artemis and the following developments posed challenges to the discourse surrounding the Swedish soldier as professional and internationalist. Expectations about the Swedish soldiers were illustrated by the statement that Swedes could not make themselves guilty of using torture-like interrogation methods because their training included an emphasis on fundamental Swedish values (DN 9 April 2008).

In general, two trends could be identified in the handling of the torture-case. Firstly, a generalised reaction where Swedish soldiers were praised as competent, that either acted correctly, or if they did not, had been subjected to (psychological) pressure that made it impossible for them to act otherwise. Conversely, soldiers of other nationalities, in this case the French, were generalised as being neo-colonial, even racist in their actions. Secondly, there was scapegoating, either of an individual Swedish officer (Hans Alm in this case) in particular, or of the other soldiers (French) in general. The main actors involved were the media, the military leadership as well as individual officers, and perhaps more secondary, politicians.

With regards to the first, the initial reactions from the media as well as the military tended generally towards seeing the Swedes as having acted correctly and courageously. Criticism against the acts of the commanding officer was “principle”, for not having reported adequately about the incident to Headquarters. However, it was also underlined from the side of the Armed Forces that many rumours and unconfirmed stories would always circulate around operations. Both from the military and the media statements were spread, stating that there was much psychological pressure against the soldiers and officers in field, and the television exposure was deemed as too harsh. Summarised, the media as well as the military held that the Swedish soldiers had done well, that misdeeds were the result of psychological pressure, and that the negative information that had been presented was both too harsh, and additionally one of many unconfirmed stories that would always appear around operations.

As for politicians, the Left party MP was again the first to raise the issue. While she [the Left MP] did point at the macho culture among the Swedish troops as problematic, foreign soldiers racist handling of the local population was also criticised. The Left MP and in particular the Minister of Defence did however reiterate several times that the incident was an “insult” to the Swedish contingent in general, that the individual Swedish soldier was not to feel himself questioned, and that the debate surrounding the torture-allegation was not to be seen as criticism against them.

As the story developed, the media focussed to a large degree on one individual officer, who allegedly had acted incorrectly. When the group of anonymous soldiers later claimed that Colonel Alm had been unfairly portrayed, the allegation quickly disappeared as the three reporters behind *Uppdrag granskning* wrote a reply criticising the soldiers as not wanting to answer questions about what had really happened in the Congo. Furthermore, criticism was directed towards responsible individuals in the Armed Forces leadership for their handling of the case.

The media also focussed on the wrongdoings of the French, though this time the focus was more general and undifferentiated. Illustrative was the interview where a journalist from SR seemed eager to have Colonel Alm confirm the image of the French

soldiers as acting in a neo-colonial way. In several instances the media recounted stories about how the French were having a bad influence on the Swedish troops. Concluding, as hypothesised the challenges to individual-level discourse were largely externalised.

### **5.3 Actors, roles and reactions**

Let us now look more specifically at how the different key actors reacted to the cases of dissonance. From what has already been stated, it should be clear that their reactions have diverged somewhat. However, this does not contradict the theory of cognitive dissonance, rather it should be qualified by the caveat that actors also act in accordance to certain roles. This brings us back to the “logic of appropriateness” as developed by March & Olsen (2004: 4). As one of the fundamental assumptions of this paper is that norms of appropriate behaviour are important, so is acknowledging that these also vary depending on the roles persons or organisations play. Actors are all embedded in discourse, but have different positions within it and their reactions are formed by the roles they play. I will here look at politicians, the military and the media.

#### **5.3.1 Politicians**

What is perhaps most striking about the reactions of politicians to dissonance is that they were both divergent and very similar at the same time. Some parties, in particular the opposition socialists, did at several occasions raise the issues of divergence, criticising these and demanding a change of policy. After the revelation of torture in the DRC, the Left Party criticised the macho culture of the Swedish troops. In both that case and Eufor Tchad/RCA, they made references to France’ colonial history and its bad influence on the Swedish forces. The governing parties, while expressing heed to the remarks made by the opposition, seemed less inclined to discuss the issues, dismissing the dissonance in cases such as Eufor Tchad/RCA. On the other hand, the opposition as well as the Government were quick in underlining their continued support for the Swedish troops and assurance that these were competent and lived up to high standards.

The difference in reactions between the different parties can be explained both by their institutional roles as well as their ideological history. As for the prior, it can be

expected that the opposition will criticise the Government for its policy and decisions, as well as the effects thereof, and the Government will defend the same. If politically difficult situations arise, the Government will most likely discuss this and try to solve it internally, whereas the Opposition can be expected to use the media and Parliament as fora in order to raise and debate the same issues. The effect of this on any analysis is that it seemingly polarises political positions. This is not always the case, as foreign policy tends to be very consensus oriented in Sweden. However, politicians have an obvious interest in being seen and heard, in winning political battles and avoiding political losses. They are often outwardly forced to stick to their initial positions as withdrawal and the change of opinion tends to be seen as defeat. The path-dependency resulting from previous choices is well known within political science (Pierson 2000: 251). If they are forced to alter their position, they may therefore want to frame it in such a way as to show continuity (even for themselves, see Jervis 1976). An example of this was the earlier cited debate surrounding the extension of EUFOR Tchad/RCA, where the Social Democrats were criticised for having raised questions against the operation. The latter stated that they had not raised questions against the operation as such, but against France as lead nation specifically (Swedish Parliament 17 June 2008).

The ideological background of the political parties has already been mentioned. In general, the Social Democrats and Left party tend to be more third world-oriented, more critical of the US and NATO and more eager to defend the traditional Swedish foreign policy norms such as military non-alignment (Bjereld et al. 2008; Mattsson 2010). The Left Party in particular has always held an independent stance in foreign policy issues, in opposition to the Social Democrats who in turn have dictated it for the most of the post-World War II period. It is therefore possible to claim that the Left Party simply does not belong to the dominant discourse surrounding Swedish participation in peace operations. As a consequence, their reactions can also be expected to differ from those of others, as their form of dissonance is not the same. In other words, although not all the findings fit the hypotheses, this can also be explained by other factors.

### **5.3.2 Military**

The Armed Forces held a central position in the debate surrounding Operation Artemis, and to a lesser degree in connection with Eufor Tchad/RCA. As for the prior, the military first seemed intent on playing down the torture-case, but was forced to retract by the heated debate and media scrutiny. Throughout the development of the case, the Armed Forces admitted criticism against the commanding officer (Colonel Alm) while they at the same time expressed trust in him. The Armed Forces also repeatedly highlighted the competence and professionalism of the Swedish soldiers. With regards to Eufor Tchad/RCA, the military did not actively engage in the debate surrounding the grounds and neutrality of the operation, but did express in media comments and through its own reports its internationalist, humanitarian nature.

Summarised, the Armed Forces supported but did not do much to actively defend the discourse surrounding the participation in the two peace operations. This can also be explained on at least two accounts. The military is a unique organisation in many ways. Together with the police they have a monopoly on the use of violence, and are thereby a defining feature of the Weberian state. The military is at the same time an organisation like any other, with its own interests (see Ydén 2008). It therefore relies on support, in particular from politicians, but also from the public in the long-term in order to ensure its budget and priorities. This organisational self-preservation helps explain why the Armed Forces have invested large sums into public affairs-work, including professionally made videos that show off their good work. It also helps explain why the military has an interest in avoiding criticism of its organisation, and in this case avoiding scrutiny over its handling of the torture-case in the DRC. With regards to EUFOR Tchad/RCA and the question of colonial collaboration, it is a more sensitive issue as the military in Sweden is strictly placed under civilian control and is not supposed to have any political priorities of its own. It does however seem plausible that even in this case the Armed Forces would have an incentive to avoid focus on issues of contention, rather putting focus on the positive impact of its work. This in turn could give more support, more prestige and more resources to the organisation.

Finally, the military also consists of individual soldiers and officers, who have a personal interest in taking care of their own reputation and career. The Armed Forces might have interest in limiting criticism to individual officers, who in turn can be reprimanded for what they have done. The individual officer, however, might not always share that same interest, and as a consequence, the same reaction.

### **5.3.3 Media**

The media's reaction to dissonance was two-sided. On the one hand, the media actually brought to light the dissonances in the case of Operation Artemis, and to a certain but more hesitant degree, Eufor Tchad/RCA. On the other hand, the media in its handling of the two cases of dissonance also reacted by reporting in particular way. On Operation Artemis, the media focussed much on the individual commanding officer, and during Eufor Tchad/RCA, the media hinted at the issue of neutrality, but never carried through a thorough investigation. In both cases the media also paid much focus on the generally good behaviour and values of the Swedish soldiers, in opposition to the French.

The media's position in the discourse is special: while we use the media as a source of information about discourses and expectations, as expressed by different actors, the media is also an autonomous actor. Often we hear that the *raison d'être* for the media is to critically investigate the Government and military. It follows that the media took on a more critical, questioning stance with regards to both peace operations.

However, the media is not itself an unbiased container for objective news. This is apparent if we look at op.ed.s. and blog posts, but even news articles and reports are subject to bias. There are several studies of media bias and its role in forming public discourse (Entman 2007: 163-164). However, the media is also itself embedded in discourse. Several examples of this were presented in chapter 4, such as the media's persistence in asking Swedish officers about the cultural difference between Swedish and French forces in the DRC and Chad, implying that possible wrongdoings committed by the Swedes were because of the French' influence. Furthermore, the media did several reports and interviews with soldiers which in almost all cases were positive,

with the exception of Colonel Alm who was singled out for his handling of the torture case in the DRC. And while the media did raise critical issues, such as the question of neutrality and neo-colonial collaboration in Chad, the majority of the news coverage conveyed the Government's stated grounds for participation in the intervention without questioning these. In conclusion, while calling forth dissonance, the media also seemed to frame it in a way that did not compromise discourse, as was hypothesised.

#### **5.4 *Alternative frameworks***

The previous section has tried to show how cognitive dissonance theory can cast light on the reactions to the challenges to discourse, as well as explaining divergences. However, cognitive dissonance is not the only possible theory explaining for the reactions we have seen. Other theories may complement or compete against this theory.

Firstly, an alternative framework can be found in the organisational process approach. Rather than framing the responses to disturbances of discourse as the result of cognitive dissonance, they can be seen as the result of individual actors acting in accordance with established routines, so-called "standard operating procedures" (see Allison 1969; Carlsnaes 2002: 337). Many of the assumptions of this approach are embedded in this study's theoretical framework; roles and routine behaviour play an important role. However, while a narrow organisational process-framework is a compelling framework for looking at much day-to-day foreign policy work, it fits awkwardly with those situations in which expected behaviour has not actually been followed. Furthermore, while it in turn might explain many of the reactions of key actors, it does not adequately explain ambiguity, as when opposition politicians would express hesitance towards the foundations of a mission and at the same time express unfaltering support and trust in Swedish participation in peace operations.

Secondly, another possible theoretical model would be the one underpinning many social science theories, namely utility-maximising rational behaviour. In other words, individuals are expected to have responded to the controversies in a way that would best serve their own interests. The Armed Forces would act to protect its own



budget and priorities, the media would act in order to draw the largest number of readers or viewers, opposition politicians would act in order to slate the Government, and Governing politicians would act in order to protect themselves. On top of that, certain individuals would act in opposition to their own organisation in case it would benefit them. These incentives that guide behaviour have already been mentioned earlier as they cannot be discounted. But while this theory is able to explain the behaviour of key actors to a large extent, it still is inadequate to explain certain behaviour which does not seem to be utility-maximising. For example, why would the Government allegedly go at lengths to ensure that neutrality should be written into the operation plans of EUFOR Tchad/RCA if their main motive for participation would be to increase the country's status within the EU? Or more fundamentally, why would actors spend so much time giving heed to arguments of moral obligation for participation if all behaviour is guided by more selfish concerns? While the rational choice approach can give much insight into the behaviour of individuals, it struggles with explaining other situations.

This brings me to look at alternative IR theories. This paper adopts a social constructivist framework. However, what would rationalist theories such as neo-realism and neo-liberalism say? Many neo-realists would probably ignore the research questions altogether; norms do not have any explanatory power in foreign policy. It would therefore be of little interest to study the reactions to cases when norms are breached. The fact that neither case resulted in any policy change would possibly give support to such a theory. While there will always be some dissenting voices, the main point is that the Swedish state did not alter its behaviour, but rather continued along the road paved by external circumstances. This is true, with the exception of more minor actions such as lobbying for neutrality to be included in the operation plans of EUFOR Tchad/RCA, or temporarily suspending the officer under scrutiny from service in the case of Operation Artemis. However the argument would probably not hold for more extreme cases, such as My Lai, Abu Ghraib and the already-mentioned Kunduz-bombing. Furthermore, neo-liberalists such as Keohane & Nye acknowledge the existence of

norms and their role in circumscribing the activities of states. Therefore, some variants of rationalism can be reconciled with my theoretical framework.

All the above-mentioned approaches offer interesting perspectives and insight, and they all probably would be part of a “full” explanation of events, if such an explanation were feasible. What makes the theory of cognitive dissonance particularly interesting in this case though is the fact that it casts light on how support can be brittle and depend on expectations. A constructivist framework in turn might allow us to see why expectations vary between countries or over time.

## 6 Concluding remarks

The point of departure for this study was the two following research questions:

1. *What is the contemporary dominant discourse surrounding Swedish participation in peace operations?*
2. *How do key actors react when that discourse is challenged?*

The quick answer to the first question is that the discourse is dominated by internationalism, still but perhaps decreasingly so military non-alignment, and increasingly so europeanisation. The discourse has been found both in general as well as specific to the two cases investigated in this paper. With regards to the second question, the same two cases showed that key actors largely reacted in a way that did not challenge the dominant discourse. Examples were ignoring disturbances to discourse, minimising their importance and effect, as well as projecting challenging images onto individuals in particular or foreign nationals/others in general.

### 6.1 Real-world implications?

Let us consider what would have happened in the opposite case, if the challenge to discourse was so serious that it could not be dismissed. Imagine there was evidence of mass-scale human rights abuse among Swedish soldiers abroad, or of the Government getting involved in neo-colonial expeditions abroad merely to score points in Brussels. As argued earlier on, if the dominant discourse is fundamentally challenged, or systematically so over time, it might lead to a discursive change. People would alter their views and expectations of Swedish participation in peace operations abroad. This leads us to the answer of the “so what?”-question. What are the real-world implications?

In order for opinion-makers to commit troops and money at potential political cost for such activities, the general public have to share the same opinion. Largely still, they do. In the 2009 opinion poll commissioned by the Swedish National Board of

Psychological Defence, 56 percent of Swedes responded that they considered it right of Sweden to send units abroad, whereas 22 percent responded negatively. However, the last decade support has steadily decreased, from 74 percent expressing support in 1999 versus 20 percent expressing the opposite. The only reported year in which respondents have been more negative than in 2009 to sending units abroad, was in 2004 when the results for and against were 51 percent and 29 percent respectively (Swedish National Board of Psychological Defence 2010). The negative results were most probably connected to the deployment of troops to Afghanistan.

Concluding, it is fairly safe to say that support is more fragile than it has been in the past. The two cases in question do not seem to have had significant negative impact; in 2008, 43 percent of all respondents supported Swedish participation in EUFOR Tchad/RCA, 16 percent were opposed to it and the rest undecided. The operation thus was slightly more supported than ISAF in Afghanistan, and slightly less than NATO-led operations in Kosovo and the possible UN-led operation in Darfur (Swedish National Board of Psychological Defence 2008). Despite the torture case during Operation Artemis, it did not seem to affect the overall support of Swedish engagement.

Whereas some unique incidents might not jeopardise public support, there is always the danger that more serious situations will occur. The question is then how much scrutiny and negative publicity Swedish peacekeepers can experience before the general public's support of their work falters. Obviously the question cannot be answered here, but it is relevant and has to be considered. As stated in chapter 2, the public's ability to tolerate the risks implied by peace operations is related to their perception of how worthy the cause is. If they neither believe the cause merits the possibility of casualties, nor are they sure that their soldiers will be to perform the mission well, will Sweden be able to continue its support and engagement in peace operations across the world? If the question is answered in the negative, then the effects will probably be detrimental for the Swedish Armed Forces. They will lose resources and be further marginalised. Furthermore, another group to carry the consequences will be those civilians and refugees who today receive protection from Swedish soldiers.

## **6.2 Future development**

1 July 2010, during the time of writing, Sweden ended conscription. Since 1901 Sweden has practiced general conscription, however the country has never been directly involved in any war in the same period. 16 June 2009 the Parliament adopted the decision to end conscription and move towards a fully professional army. At the same time, the Armed Forces are in the process of introducing mandatory participation in peace operations abroad for all of its officers, which up until now has been mostly optional. Whereas the dozen voluntary defence organisations will remain and thereby uphold some of the particularly civilian character of the Swedish defence, professionalisation may result in a larger divide developing between the Armed Forces and the general public. In the US, the all-volunteer military has become more Republican and religious compared to the population as a whole. Several scholars have highlighted the potentially troubling effects of a larger civil-military gap, including a loss of mutual respect (Feaver et al. 2001: 4)

Media scrutiny will surely increase in years to come. In particular, new forms of media will gain prominence. During the same summer of writing, a new milepost was passed as Wikileaks released 75,000 US military logs on the war in Afghanistan. Journalists and the public alike were able to read thousands of documents on accidental killings of civilians, on Taliban attacks and much more. Wikileaks itself is hosted by a Sweden-based web company. The changed media will pose new challenges for the military as well as political decision-makers.

Since Operation Artemis and EUFOR Tchad/RCA, the EU has through the Lisbon Treaty established the post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. How the EU will continue in developing its common foreign and security policy is not clear. In other words, we can neither say what the political framework in year's to come will be, nor can we foresee the long-term developments of Sweden's foreign policy. Future studies on the perception and support of peace operations will be necessary. Not so much because previous studies such as this have been wrong. Rather, because they are so quickly out of date.

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